

<36614136450019

<36614136450019

Bayer. Staatsbibliothek

P. o. angl. 378 f

THE NUN.

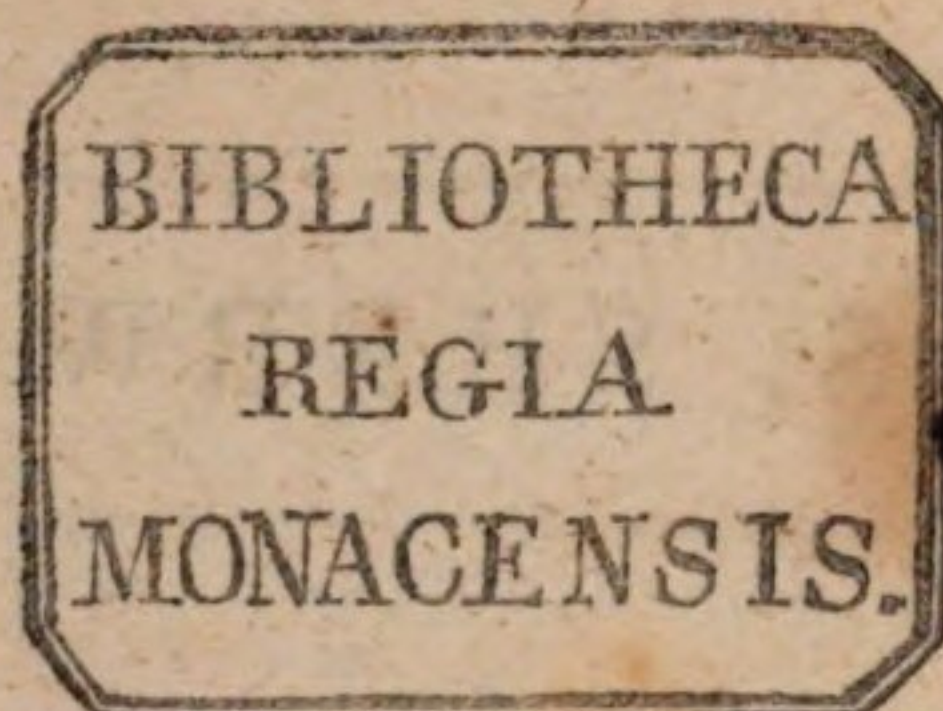
BY MRS. SHERWOOD.

THIRD AMERICAN FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION.

PHILADELPHIA :

J. WHETHAM, 22 S. FOURTH STREET.

1835.



Philadelphia :
Printed by James Kay, Jun. & Co
Race Street above 4th.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	I.	INTRODUCTION,		5
	II.	THE PROFESSION,		34
	III.	A CONVENT LIFE,		65
	IV.	THE SECLUDED SISTER,		91
	V.	THE BISHOP'S VISIT,		118
	VI.	THE PESTILENCE,		149
	VII.	TROUBLES FROM WITHOUT,		184
	VIII.	DELIVERANCE,		201
	IX.	THE REFUGE,		224
	X.	THE TRIALS OF CLARICE,		250
	XI.	CONCLUSION,		310

T H E N U N .

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no form of religion on earth which has supplied so many scenes for romance, as that of the great Roman Catholic Apostacy ; which indeed, in the days of its exaltation, possessed much that is needful for rendering works of imagination most interesting to the mind of man, namely, power, and splendour, and the means of exciting the passions to the utmost—and, above all, mystery—intricate and unfathomable mystery—such as is emphatically denominated in scripture, “the mystery of iniquity.” Yet, although so many works of fancy have been formed with these materials, and in many instances with much success ; and although history is filled with tragedies wrought in real life, by this same powerful and complicated machinery ; I do not know where I could find any thing like a resemblance to the scenes which I am about to bring forward, in the many multiplied volumes of which the country I

now inhabit has to boast. Madame de Genlis has indeed, in one of her little dramas, betrayed some secrets of the nature of those that I am about to reveal, and which one would almost wonder how she should have dared to have adverted to, at the period in which her work appeared: but, with the exception of this little piece, I hardly know where else to find any thing like a representation of the interior of a convent, or even the slightest view of the various little low cabals, which agitate the minds of those secluded females, who have thus, unauthorized by scripture, endeavoured to disengage themselves from the cares and business of active life; only, I fear, in most instances, to find, by sad experience, that their own hearts were far more dangerous companions than those which their heavenly Father provided for them, when he gave them their places in the great family of mankind.

I shall not trouble my reader with a very particular account of my early life. I am a native of Turin. I was brought up according to the strictest principles of the Roman Catholic faith, and entered into existence some years before those disturbances occurred in France, which have operated so mighty a change in many of the kingdoms of the continent of Europe. My fortune was respectable, and entirely in my own power. I was left an orphan in very early life; and the loss of an only and very dear sister, which took place about the time I came of age, acted so powerfully on my mind, that I felt myself strongly inclined to become a religieuse, or rather, I should say, a nun. I was, however, not disposed to

leap before I looked, and therefore I resolved to become a pensionaire, or boarder, in a convent, for a short time, before I decided on my future plans. It is not my intention to tell my family name ; that which I received at my baptism was Cecile, my birth having taken place on Santa Cecilia's day ; hence this Santa was my patroness, and it was thought that she had not been unmindful of me, as I early exhibited some talent for music.

I know not that I had any other particular natural advantage, but I was not deficient in any way, and had therefore no temptation of that kind to withdraw myself from the world. I should add, that, although brought up strictly, as it regarded the religion of my parents, I had received more intellectual improvement than most young ladies of my rank in my own country, where, I am sorry to say, our ladies knew very little at the period of which I speak. And thus, having presented myself to my reader, I trust that he will have no objection to follow me through the scenes into which I am about to introduce him. But it is not my intention to indulge his curiosity, by giving the true name of the town, near to which the events took place of which I am about to speak ; but, to avoid confusion, I shall call it St Siffren, from the appellation of the patron of its principal church.

It happened that I had a relation and schoolfellow married at St Siffren, and that she wrote to invite me to visit her, as soon as she heard of the death of my lamented sister. My plans were quite undetermined when I received Madame Verani's letter, and

I therefore gladly accepted her invitation, and proceeded without loss of time to St Siffren, where I was received in the kindest manner. But Madame Verani lived in the world, that is, in the little world of the small town in which she resided. I could not partake of her amusements ; my heart was still too sad, and therefore she had not power to divert me from my original idea of withdrawing to a convent.

There is not a more beautiful situation in the dominions of the king of Sardinia, exquisitely fine as are many parts of the territories of this king of hills, than that of St Siffren. It is a small fortified town, on the side of a gentle slope, commanding on the west and south the prospect of a charming valley, watered by a stream which draws its source from the neighbouring mountains, and which, after running a few leagues, loses its very name by mingling its waters with those of the Rhone, above its fall into the lake of Geneva.

The country around St Siffren is so far north as to have lost the Italian style of scenery which prevails near the shores of the Mediterranean : but if, in consequence, the acacia, the citron, the aloe, the olive, and the caroube have disappeared from its groves and gardens ; and if the cypress is more rare, and the palm-tree never seen ; yet I know not whether the deficiency of these is not more than made up, by the richness of its meadows and the charming verdure of its fragrant downs ; in consequence of which the country abounds with flocks, which in warmer months of the year, are drawn up into the mountains, where the shepherds have erect-

ed their chalets, in regions unapproachable during the frosts of winter.

But while the little town commands a view of an open country towards the north and west, the mountains rise directly from its walls on the other quarters,—some of them being abrupt and precipitous, and nearly inaccessible to any foot but that of the chamois; and others again presenting rounded forms and gentle slopes covered with a soft thymy herbage; in several instances being crowned with groves of dark pine, as elegantly and faithfully arranged by nature, as if they had been expressly planted there by the imitative art of the ornamental gardener. Among these arose many streams of the purest water, which, in proportion as the summer heat increased, poured more and more abundantly from the heights, as it were boasting the inexhaustible nature of the source from whence they sprang. Nevertheless, these waters are arrested in their course during the winter, and hang from the rocks in long transparent pendants, sparkling in the sunbeam like drops of diamonds.

Immediately beyond the southern gate of St Siffren, the road towards the mountains makes a steep and rapid ascent till it comes into a line with the pepper-box turret on each side of the gateway of the town, and there it joins a terrace of stone, which runs parallel with the wall of the town, though on a level, as I before remarked, with the tower upon that wall.

Along this terrace, when I first knew St Siffren, was a row of chestnut trees, behind which was a line

of gloomy buildings, showing few windows towards the front, and those being narrow, far from the ground, and double grated. This edifice was a convent of Notre Dame de Misericorde, of the order of St Augustin ;—a convent of very old establishment, and high renown for sanctity, of which the superior was an abbess, and, at the time I speak of, an individual of the noble family of Lascaris, supposed to be descended from the Emperors of the east. Behind this convent was a very large garden, which was the more beautiful, as it encroached upon the hill which rose immediately behind the house, and in consequence was divested of that stiffness which must always be found in a pleasure ground situated on a perfect level. This garden was surrounded by exceedingly high walls, and moreover was shaded by a line of very tall cedar trees planted within the wall; yet was it commanded from the hill behind, though at so great a distance as by no means to incommode those who took the air, even in the most exposed part of the garden. This spot of ground had also another advantage, which was this, that a little stream of clear water from the hills passed through it, a low grated arch being provided in the wall for its entrance, and another, on the other side for its exit.

I was exceedingly captivated with the appearance of this establishment, and having made up my mind to obtain admission therein, if possible, I got my friend, Madame Verani, to speak to Father Joachim, the confessor of the household, who presently intimated that Madame la Superieure would see me at

an hour appointed, on a certain day in the following week ; in consequence of which, my friend and myself repaired to the house at the time fixed. Being arrived on the terrace under the walls of the convent, we walked slowly forwards, and there was a decided impression of awe on the minds of both of us.

So many of the ancient religious edifices were destroyed during the revolutions which subsequently affected many of the continental countries, that we now seldom see a monastic society invested with all those circumstances of solemn majesty, in which they were clothed in the days of darkness now passing away. The convent of which I am speaking had as yet been undisturbed. It still retained all its appurtenances of old magnificence, its fanes and towers of gothic masonry, its various emblematic sculptures, its emblazoned windows, lofty halls, and long arcades, its marble shrines, and relics, and golden candelabra, and crosses of bronze and alabaster, together with many of those emblems of idolatry with which the apostate church loves to adorn her sanctuaries.

I was at that time a devoted Papist, and therefore was prepared to admire and venerate all that I should see in this seat of divine purity, such as I supposed all places of this kind to be ;—not considering that, as every person who enters a house of this kind brings with her a depraved nature, a body of sin from which she can be only delivered by death, those bars and locks which shut out the busy world, have no power to exclude the passions which destroy the peace, and which will probably grow the deeper

into the heart of the individual, from not having the means of expending themselves provided by that kind Providence, which, at the period of the fall, ordained that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

But, as I said, my friend and I passed on till we arrived before the chief entrance of the house. It was not a gateway, but a double door, embossed with iron, and set deep in the thick wall, the frame of the door being of granite, fluted and rising to a point, over which, in a niche in the wall, was a stone figure of a religieuse, in the dress of the order, kneeling with hands upraised toward some object in the corner of the niche which I could not make out, though I supposed it might have been intended for a dove. From the lips of the female figure proceeded a scroll, on which was written—*Misericordias Dei in æternum cantabo*. We had pulled a bell, and whilst we were examining the sculpture, we heard approaching steps, and then the pulling of a bolt, and the turning of a key in the lock. A very old woman opened the door, whose dress nearly resembled that of the figure we had been considering. It seems that she was one of those inferior sisters of the convent who are admitted without any payment, and who perform the parts of menials: these persons take the three vows of poverty, chastity, and piety, as well as the sisters of higher degree.

It seems that the porteress was aware that we were expected, for she admitted us without a word; and whilst she was barring the door again, we were looking around us from the place in which we stood.

We were standing in a vaulted passage, having doors on each side; that nearest us, on the left, communicated with the church, and was used, as I afterwards found, by the priests; but beyond these doors was a double grating and folding shutters, which last might be so placed as to prevent any one, situated as we were, from seeing any thing beyond the grating. These shutters were, however, partially open, and I could see that the passage extended beyond them to a square open court, surrounded by low buildings, and having a cloistered walk around it; a marble cross and a pediment in the centre, was dimly visible beyond the arched opening of the passage. But I must not forget to say that, besides the doors which opened into that part of the passage in which we stood, there were certain little barred apertures, filled up with double gratings, the outer of which were iron, the inner cane, as were most of the gratings in the house. Within these apertures hung black curtains; but the porteress having barred the outer gate, stepped before us, and passing by the door which led into the church, stopped at the next, which having opened, she introduced us into a small paved hall, without mat or carpet, and having no other furniture than a few chairs, and a large oil painting of a religieuse, in which we recognised the stone figure over the portal. Under this figure, in black letters, we read these words—

*Santa Mater Teresa, a Jesu Fondatrix
Ordinis Sanctæ Mariæ a Monte Carmeli.*

In the inner wall of this hall was a long grating provided with a curtain within; and on one side of this grating a circular iron box, by which any thing might be passed into the inner chamber.

My friend and I sat down, as directed, before this grating, and had not waited a minute before the curtain was withdrawn, and the Superieure appeared behind it. I trembled at the instant my eye fell upon her, such was my idea at that time of the exalted character of the head of such an establishment as that into which I was about to enter; indeed, my agitation was such, that I was unable to speak for a few minutes, though I bowed profoundly, and could hardly be persuaded to sit down. The abbess was a little woman, though possessing much dignity of manner. She was probably more than forty years of age, nor did she look young for that age; her complexion was extremely pale, and the upper part of her face had been beautiful, her eyes being of bright hazle, and her eyebrows delicately pencilled, which, in a face not relieved by hair, had a particularly pleasing effect. Her manners were those of the most perfect politeness, and that of a superior kind; indeed, even had I not previously known that she was descended from Irene, daughter of the Lascaris, I certainly should have attributed nobility of birth to one possessed of so very superior an air; but I did not expect what she exhibited the instant she became sensible of the state of my feelings, namely, a most encouraging and even caressing manner, and of a sort which, had I previously been balancing re-

specting my vocation, would, I felt, have instantly decided me.

“My daughter,” she said, “you are an orphan, I understand, and are willing to seek a mother in me. Believe me, my arms and my heart are open to you ; many doves have fled from the cruel and dangerous world to find shelter within these sacred walls, where they enjoy a peace which the world cannot give ; and here, within the ark, they are borne above the cares and troubles of this tempestuous life, into that haven of peace where all things are new. The church,” added she, addressing my friend, “is as the ark of Noah ; without it, is a perishing world ; within it, is safety—perfect safety—and peace, and holy joy. You think, Madame,” she continued, “you think, perhaps, that we are unhappy here ; how little you, how little the world know us. You fancy that our life is monotonous, that it is dull, fatiguing, heavy ; that we know not what to do with our hours ; that we are haunted with ennui,” and she spoke rapidly and with extreme vivacity, laughing heartily at intervals, and then catching herself up, and saying, “Do you not watch and break your rest in the service of the world ? do you not labour and toil, and fret, and repine, and suffer privations and mortifications ? and what is your reward, but anguish and remorse ? We watch and labour also, and what do we gain by these our holy services ? Do we not render ourselves acceptable to our God by them ? Are we not blessed in the favour of our holy Mother ? In truth, you are as indefatigable as we are, but your master is the evil one, and from him you must look

for your reward ; whereas we are looking for a crown which fadeth not away, and whilst awaiting this crown, we, by prayer and fasting, and suffering poverty, in order that thereby we may enrich others, are satisfying God for our sins, and laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven ; for as the angel Raphael said to Tobias, ‘Prayer, accompanied by fasting and alms-giving, is worth more than all the treasures and all the gold which could be amassed.’ ”

Madame Verani, on hearing all this, seemed hardly able to look up at the lady, such was her sense of her superiority, a feeling which was, no doubt, understood by the other, for she was thereby encouraged to expatiate, for some time, on the holy joy which is obtained by a life wholly devoted to the works of prayer, and praise, and divine meditation. After which, addressing me with much kindness of manner, she made me give an account of the motives and feelings which had led me to seek this interview. I was candid with her ; I opened all my feelings to her ; nay, I believe that I should have found it difficult to have concealed any thing from her, so skilful was she in entwining herself round the young heart ; and as she decidedly declined taking me in as a pensionaire unless my present determination was to take the veil ; and as I did not feel myself able to resist her, it was settled that I should return in a few days, remain a short time as a pensionaire, and if in that period nothing should happen to change my mind, I should take the white veil ;—she having made me understand that the ceremonial of taking the white veil would not bind me to remain in the establish-

ment, at the same time that it would allow me to associate freely with the sisters, and to judge correctly of the mode of life which as a mere boarder I could not do ; the regulations of the house not permitting a pensionaire to converse freely, or to take her meals, with the professed. Then addressing my friend again, "Madame Verani," she said, "my reason for these cautions shall be explained to you with all candour. Our establishment is, as you know, one of the highest respectability, and it depends on me to guard its renown for sanctity in every way which I can command. I blame myself exceedingly for having been induced, from motives of weak humanity, to take in a lady some months since as a pretendante, who, after having exhibited much changeableness of temper, left me in a very unhandsome manner, although she had had a severe illness in the house, and had been attended by one of my most beloved daughters." A slight flush passed over the countenance of the Superieure as she was relating this anecdote, as if it had renewed some exceedingly painful feelings within her breast ; but immediately becoming cool, she began to laugh,—I may say, to force a laugh, as I have since remembered, and addressing me again, "Well, my child," she said, "do you consent to my plan? Does the idea of your espousals alarm you? Would you wish to take more time to think of it?" And she added somewhat more in the same strain, which I will not now repeat, for the style of language used in convents respecting the Lord the Saviour, appears to me so grossly blasphemous, that I tremble at the thought that I ever

could have used it. The female who takes the white veil is called the espoused : and our blessed Lord is commonly designated, and that in the most uncere- monious manner, by the name of the husband ;—the inferior nuns, and persons of the household of the coarsest mind often saying, This must not be done, or that must not be done, for my husband will not approve it.

It is true that the union of Christ with his Church is shown forth in scripture under the emblem of marriage ; but surely the familiar use of this figure, and its application to individuals, cannot be approved by a correct and pious mind : but at the period of which I speak, I did not see the impropriety of this mode of speech. There was something very elevat- ing, on the contrary, to my mind, in the idea of my being called “*la Sposa.*” And here, if it were not out of place, I could remark, how directly the mo- nastic system leads to that spirit in the individual, which is expressed in these words, *Stand by, I am holier than thou.*

Our conference with the abbess was long, and it was arranged during that conference, that I should be received the next day as a pensionaire, with the view of taking the white veil as soon as possible,—Madame la Superieure having taken much pains to convince me that it would be quite as easy for me to return to the world after having laid aside my secu- ar habits as before, and not dropping the smallest hint by which I might be led to understand the truth, namely, that such a step would infallibly destroy my credit, not only with all good catholics, but with the

world itself. For much as the world may be supposed to think lightly of a religious profession, it has no charity for one who, having once set his hand to the plough, turns back again from that which he has undertaken. I hope I do not wrong the Superieure, and with her all the rulers of monastic orders, by saying, that they are very skilful in fitting their temptations to the supposed state of mind of the person whom they intend to allure,—stooping to arts which would hardly be believed by persons not acquainted with their ideas of expediency. Of this, however, I shall presently give an example; for, before we took leave, my friend having expressed a wish to see some of my future companions, if it were not contrary to the rules of the house, the Superieure arose with alacrity, and passing out through an inner door, spoke to a person without, and returned immediately to her seat near the grate. It was, however, nearly ten minutes before the summons was obeyed. At the end of which time three sisters entered the apartment.

My protestant reader, although it may be that you have never seen a religieuse, yet I cannot suppose but that you have formed some idea of one; and if your imagination has any life in it, you have already depicted to yourself the sort of figures which were to appear at the summons of the Superieure; and I think I may be well assured that your ideas will not be consonant with the reality. The three young ladies who entered behind the grating, were as elegant young women, as to their carriage, as I had ever seen; and this will be understood, when I ex-

plain that a principal part of the business of the life of a religieuse is to form a part in the pantomime of the apostate church, and to fill up a portion of a picture meant to be imposingly beautiful. A graceful manner, therefore, is often very remarkable among the sisters; but the three which had been selected to be introduced on the present occasion, were, as I afterwards found, particularly suited for an exhibition of this kind, and for the part they were to act in it. I knew them afterwards by the names of Honorine, Catharine, and Marguerite. They were the most beautiful girls in the convent, with the exception of two only, of whom I shall speak more hereafter. They were entirely devoted, I can hardly venture to say, to their religion, but to their party: hence they possessed as eager desires to augment their numbers, as a sergeant (to use a homely simile) would naturally feel, who is to get his reward for every recruit. They knew perfectly well wherefore they were called, and that it was their clue to seem excessively gay. Hence they entered all smiling, and as it were full of rapture, being flushed, at the same time, at the sight of strangers; and ranging themselves by their spiritual mother, they began a somewhat elaborate yet successful display of their extreme happiness; the Superieure, at the same time, enjoying the surprise of my friend.

“Behold my daughters,” she said, “do they seem very sad? which of the pale votaries of worldly pleasures resemble my blooming children?”—and whilst she continued to hold forth in this strain, my future companions were addressing me and each

other by turns. The sister, Marguerite, who was the oldest of the party, and therefore the most at home in the character she was to act, having looked at me a moment, whispered to the others, "Ah ! comme elle est jolie !" and then proceeded to remark, how a habit such as they wore would become me ; to which the others assented looking eagerly through the grating. I knew that I had never been thought beautiful, and yet I was pleased ; and having my hand on the grate, Marguerite put hers through, and seizing it said, "Now we have you, and we will keep you : " on which they all laughed heartily, being joined by the Superieure.

Our conference broke off soon after this, and I returned to my friend's house, impatient for the day in which I was to renew my acquaintance with the three charming girls whom I had seen behind the grate.

I now proceed to the period of my becoming an inmate of the house. It was on the morning of the third day after my visit, that I found myself again within the outer door mentioned above. The portress, having barred the gate behind me, selected another key from her huge bunch, and having opened the grated gate, described on occasion of my first visit, and permitted me to pass through it, she stopped again to lock it.

We had, it seemed, passed the eastern side of the church, and were come into a line with that apartment called, in a convent, le chœur ; viz. that part of the church occupied during service by the sisters, and communicating with the body of the church by

gratings. This apartment, the door of which was open, resembled a beautiful hall in the style of the florid gothic, having several richly painted windows, in the centre compartment of each of which was a human figure crowned with a resplendent glory. The flooring was a tessellated pavement, and round the apartment were stalls or seats of oak, so old as to be nearly black; these also were richly wrought. There were besides several fine paintings on the wall. In one corner of the apartment, which in fact was a part of the church, was a confessional, communicating with a recess behind the high altar, where the priest could hear the confession without being admitted into the chœur. Having stopped one instant to look around, I passed on, and then saw the square court, in the centre of which was the cross of which I spoke before, and perceived that this court was not paved, but covered with grass.

“That, my sister,” said the portress, “is our burying ground: as we pass from the refectory to the chapel we have the edifying view of this place always before our eyes. We all select the precise spot where we would lie; and some of us are already provided with our coffins: it is a laudable and religious work to become thus familiarised with death, and one greatly acceptable in the sight of our Lord.” I would wish my reader to understand that in many instances in which I shall use the word *Lord*, that of husband was what the speaker really served herself withal: but this is blasphemy, which I tremble to repeat even from the mouth of another.

I was not altogether inclined to sympathise with

the old woman in these speculations on death, though I did not presume to question the propriety of encouraging thoughts of this kind. Indeed I supposed it to be an important duty, and if not agreeable to me, I imagined that it was owing to some great defect in my own mind.

But passing away from the view of the cemetery, the portress led me through a sort of anti-room, into which more than one curtain grating opened, into a parlour, appertaining to the Superieure, and where, as she informed me, I must await the arrival of Madame. So saying, she left me to amuse myself by examining the apartment, in which there was nothing very remarkable as to furniture, though the chamber had a peculiarly sombre appearance from the dark colour of the wainscot, and the depth of the walls, by which the light of the windows was considerably obscured. There were several crosses and many paintings in the room, with more than one effigy of the Virgin. But the abbess did not leave me long alone; she presently entered, and, advancing to embrace me, exclaimed in high enthusiastic mood, which I did not then suspect to be affected, "Suffer me, sweet child, to welcome you to this abode of peace, these blessed walls, from whence all the evil passions of a cruel and corrupt world are excluded. I trust, my child, that you come with the firm purpose of devoting yourself to God, by a life of poverty, celibacy, and piety;—for blessed are those, my daughter, who cast themselves in the flower and bloom of their age into the arms of a celestial Bridegroom,—thus to wear out their days in performing

those services of prayer, of penance, and of self-mortification, which are no other than the tokens of the love of the espoused, as exhibited in the personal absence of her divine husband."

These blasphemies, for I can call them no other, with many others to the same effect, she ran off with a sort of heartless and simpering glibness, which, when I reflected upon them in after life, conveyed the idea to my mind that she had many such by rote, always ready for use, as occasion called for them.

In reply, however, to these observations, I informed her that my mind was fully made up to the life of a religieuse, requesting to know how soon I might be permitted to take the white veil.

She mentioned fifteen days as the very shortest time; and then informed me that she trusted her dear daughter, for such she continued to call me, would employ that interval in those exercises of devotion and meditation, which would render her more acceptable to that glorious Consort, to whom she was about to be affianced in exclusion of all earthly rivals. She enlarged much on this point, using that style of language which I have hinted at before; and then proceeded to show me how I ought to prepare myself for these glorious espousals,—showing me how every moment of my time ought to be filled up in some meritorious form; and then flying off in a sort of general panegyric of the happy lives of those who had already devoted themselves to the heavenly Bridegroom.

"How little can the world comprehend our bliss, my daughter!" she said; "How little can it under-

stand the transports which are enjoyed by the espoused of God in the service of their beloved! What time have we for ennui? Who can say how sweetly or rapidly our hours pass on from time to eternity? or tell how blessed to us must be the passage from youth to age, and from life to death,—occupied as we are most of the day in the service of him to whom we are espoused, and rapt, as it were, in soul to his presence? The pains and fatigues of body which we experience (for the flesh is weak), only remind us of our spiritual bliss, and add more and more to those graces which render us lovely in his eyes.”

Whether there was sense or nonsense, truth or falsehood, in all this, I know not, but this I know, that it so wrought upon me, that I was quite impatient to begin my course of duties; at the same time that I was rather mortified to be told that I could only be permitted to see the sisters in general during certain hours of prayer in the chapel. “I would, sweet girl,” added the *superieure* caressingly, “gladly skip over this rule for your sake; but a wife must be obedient, you know;—the Master of this house must be obeyed. However,” she added, “you shall not be quite solitary; I shall introduce you to *la Mere Assistante*, and to one of my dear children, who, though young, is already so entirely devoted, that I do not hesitate to say, that she may be of as much use to you as I myself could be, even could I devote all my time to you. But before we break up our conference, permit me to ask you,” she said, “what name you received at your baptism?”

“Cecile, Madame,” I replied.

“Cecile !” she repeated ; “a blessed name ! Nevertheless we must aspire to a better. The first, and one of the dearest of my daughters, took the name of Angèlique, when she was professed ; but she has long been associated with her kindred angels !—will our Cecile adopt her name, and take her place ?—But I will not press you,” she added ; “you shall have time to consider all these things. What you do shall be done with a free—and I trust with an entire good will.” So saying, she kissed me again, and, still holding my hand, she led me out of her parlour into the long gallery, which ran on the back of the chœur. Here, as waiting the pleasure of the abbess, stood a young nun, whom I had not seen before ; she had her back towards us, when we first saw her, but, turning round immediately, she displayed a figure and countenance which I could not easily forget. Whether she were perfectly beautiful or not, I never could determine ; but sister Annunciata had a form and face which fixed the attention of every one who looked at her. When she was present, it was impossible to be occupied by any other person in the room. Every movement of this young lady seemed important, and every change of posture exhibited the attitudes of a noble work of the chisel. She was of Italian birth, and her face was of the finest Italian character. The general expression of her countenance was composed, but it was a composure which seemed to indicate a total want of interest in the ordinary occurrences of life. When any sudden excitement kindled her eye, it assumed a brilliancy which quite startled the beholder ; but even in such

moments as these it was difficult to discover in what manner the circumstance which had awakened her interest, had affected her feelings. I cannot say, that, in all the time I lived in the house with this young lady, I ever saw a natural or playful smile animate her features ; and even that which most awakened the mirth of those about her, would only excite a sort of glow in her marble cheek, and cause her to protrude her beautiful under-lip with something resembling scorn. But though she never smiled, when she desired to please she could assume a softness and earnestness of manner which was very impressive, and which I have seldom seen any one able to resist. The Superieure directed this young lady, or rather requested it as a favour of her, to show me my apartment, whispering, at the same time, a word to her which I did not hear ; for there can be nothing done in a convent without a whisper or signal, *a la derobe*. But this whisper being concluded, I was led by the young lady to the end of the gallery, and up a magnificent flight of stairs into a passage above, into which many doors opened : these were the doors of the cells or apartments of the sisters.

She stepped towards one of these doors, and having opened it, she introduced me into a small square chamber, the furniture of which, though scanty, was neatly arranged. Here I found my small trunk already arrived. The bed was in one corner of the room, and in a line with the head of it, a little grated window, towards which I hastened, and saw to my great pleasure that it commanded the whole of the garden, and beyond it a green hill, rich with verdure,

and crowned with a grove of pines. There were sheep feeding on this hill, and under the shade of one of the pines I could discern the shepherd, extended on the grass. I was just on the point of remarking the beauty of this scene to my companion, when, recollecting myself, I suppressed the observation, though I hardly knew wherefore. "You will, I trust, find every thing here which you may require, sister," said the nun, as I turned from the window.

"Every thing looks vastly comfortable," I answered in my haste, though I had as yet examined none of the articles in the chamber.

"Your malle is already arrived, I see," returned the sister, fixing her eyes on the trunk; "will you allow me to inquire if you have any books with you? You are aware, no doubt, that no books but those approved by Madame are allowed in the house."

I opened my little trunk, and showed her that it contained nothing but absolute necessaries. She remarked, after looking on the simple contents; "even these few possessions you will gladly give up, sister, when you take the veil; we all make the vow of poverty, and our clothes are in common."

I did not thoroughly relish this idea, and told her so.

"That," she replied, "which is least pleasing to the flesh is most agreeable to our Lord; if we refuse to make ourselves poor for his sake, how can we expect that he will impart of his riches for our sakes?"

I confessed that I had spoken unadvisedly, for the grave rebuke of this beautiful young woman had made me feel a sense of inferiority which was pain-

ful to me, and I added, "But you must pardon me, sister, and bear with me. I trust that by prayer and penitence I shall soon be set entirely free from the bonds of the flesh."

"Great," replied Annunciata, "is the efficacy of prayer, for it is the means by which alone, as reasonable creatures, we can obtain the grace of God."

I looked inquiringly at her, as one desiring instruction, and she thus proceeded, "Without the grace of God we cannot save ourselves; also, without prayer we cannot acquire this grace, according to the words of our Saviour, 'ask and you shall receive.'"*

Had I then known what I now do of the revealed word of God, I should have answered, "Man cannot pray until grace has been given to him from above, for the prayer of faith proceeds from grace already received;" but such an answer was far beyond me at that time, and I merely replied by asking her opinion respecting the forms and times of prayer which I ought to adopt in my situation as a pretendante; at the same time acknowledging that I was subject to much distraction of mind when using lengthened forms, and anxiously inquiring whether these wanderings of the mind destroyed the merit of prayer.

"Yes," she replied, "if they are voluntary; but if they are not so, our prayers will not fail to be useful to us, and agreeable to God."

She further added, on my putting the question to her, "That if I prayed in Latin or any other foreign tongue which I did not understand, God would not

* Catechisme Theologique de la Compagnie de Jesus.

fail to hearken to my requests thus made; and wherefore?—because although I did not understand what I said, God would understand my words.”*

This last assertion of the beautiful sister certainly could not be disputed, viz. that although any one should pray in a tongue unknown to himself, that tongue would not be unknown to the omniscient Ruler of all things. I was, therefore, fully satisfied by this truly Jesuitical argument, and felt every instant more and more astonished at the superior wisdom of my youthful instructress.

She then proposed to me to take a walk in the garden. “Madame,” she said, “is engaged with the sisters, the present being the hour in which they are giving an account of what they have read, but she has directed me to devote myself to you, and we shall not now be interrupted.”

I accepted her offer, but was sorry that I was not to see my future companions; however, I felt that this was not a sentiment fit to utter in the presence of sister Annunciata, I therefore accompanied her into the garden, which was indeed as lovely a spot as I had imagined it to be, having every variety of beautiful tree and fragrant flower which the climate would allow, the face of the ground being as diversified as the comparatively small space within the walls would permit. The object of all that passed between me and the sister during the walk, was to confirm me in my vocation, and to initiate me in its duties; and I could not help asking myself, what it

* Catechisme Theologique.

was in this young lady which seemed, from one moment to another, to acquire a stronger ascendancy over my mind. I set down this strange influence, at that time, to the very extraordinary sanctity which I attributed to her. I have since thought that there are some minds made for rule, and some for submission; and that there are certain intellects under which all others bend.

Our walk continued till the hour of vespers, to which we were called by a bell. Annunciata led the way, and bringing me into the court of the cemetery, we saw the sisters passing, in long and solemn order, along the cloister at the opposite end of this court, from the refectory into the chœur. All arrangements in a convent are made for effect, inso-much so that every ceremony forms a picture, and thus the eye of the uninstructed is fascinated, and the old Serpent, who has been the *primum mobile* of this great system, has retained his peculiar characteristic, viz. that of fascinating by the eye. The Superieure and sisters were all arranged in their places when I entered the chœur, and took a seat provided for me, so far behind the religieuses that I saw only their graceful figures; and as I retained this seat all the time I remained as a *pretendante*, I could scarcely be said to increase my knowledge even of their faces during all that period, though my three young friends, whom I had seen behind the grate, contrived, as they passed out before me, to give me, each day, a smile of recognition.

The service had commenced when I took my place, but as I shall have occasion hereafter to say much of

these services, and the effect which the sweet voices of the sisters had upon my feelings, I shall say the less of them at present; neither shall I greatly enlarge upon the manner in which I spent the fifteen days of my probation, any more than to observe, that, as I have since been assured, there was no small pains taken to prevent any communication with the sisters in general, though I constantly associated with Annunciata and la Mere Assistante.

I was not required to attend any other services in the chapel than those of the morning and evening, but I had several communications with Father Joachim in the confessional, who admonished me to observe certain solitary forms in my own apartment; and required me to commit to memory the seven penitentiary psalms. Thus were things so arranged that I in fact knew almost as little of my companions, and of the mode of life I was actually to lead at the end of the fifteen days, as I did the first evening of my admission into the house. In the meantime it would be difficult to describe the kindness which was shown to me by Madame la Superieure, and la Mere Ursule, who was the assistant. I had a severe cold one day, and I was put to bed and tucked up by la Mere Assistante, while the abbess herself poured out my ptisan. I hope that there was not the deep art in all this which I afterwards suspected: but I used to reason thus, even then, with myself—they can have no design in all this kindness; for am I not as much at liberty to leave them at the end of the year of my noviciate, as I am now? Nevertheless this same reasoning I speak of, argues some sort of apprehension

or doubt existing, even then, in my mind: but it must always be remembered that, at the time of which I am speaking, I was totally ignorant of real religion; and that I believed that by the step I was about to take, I was ensuring to myself a degree of happiness and glory in the life to come, which was not to be obtained by remaining in the world. I shall now proceed to the awful morning in which I was to become a novice: for it must be observed, that a person desiring to be a religieuse, is not a novice till she leaves her secular habits: then she may be said to be in her noviciate, but before she is only in a state of pretension to become a novice.

D*

CHAPTER II.

THE PROFESSION.

It was Sunday, and the bishop who was to perform the ceremony (or the celebrant, as we called him), had arrived at Saint Siffren the evening before—not expressly on my account, but for an ordination and other duties of his office—and he was to be present in the chapel, with all his functionaries, at eight in the morning. I had slept little during the night, and had risen before daylight to prayer. I think it may not be uninteresting to give an account of this ceremony.

My habits, in which I was first to appear, had been duly prepared for me ; they consisted of a muslin dress, with blue ornaments, a large bouquet of flowers, and a cap, or toque, of blue gauze, trimmed with silver : in all these I was carefully dressed, several of the sisters being now busy about me, although I was too much agitated to distinguish one from another. In the mean time all had been prepared in the chœur. From this part of the church there are two double grates ; one of which opens on the body of the church, and the other upon the high altar : these are large and wide, so that those without may see the sisters within ; and there is care generally taken to bring those most forward whose appearance will do credit to the establishment—this matter, however,

is arranged with address, though it is well understood. There had been a carpet laid in the chœur, within the upper grating, which opens on the altar, and hassocks, for myself and the Superieure to kneel upon, and just within the altar was a chair for the bishop. But it is not my intention to go through the description of all the forms which are used on this occasion—not to say what anthems were chaunted—how often the bishop's robes were changed—how the priests passed and repassed before the altar, bowing each time—or how full the church was with people, all crowding in to behold the gorgeous bridal (for this is the point of view in which the ceremony is held)—nor to tell how, sometimes solemnly, and sometimes mournfully, the organ swelled upon the ear, or died away in low and scarcely audible notes: I shall content myself with describing my own part in the ceremony. The bell having admonished us, within the house, that all was ready for the solemn ceremonial, the whole family immediately assembled in a room joining the chœur, usually called the antechœur, in order that the sisters should put on a long black draping, called *le manteau de l'Eglise*, and that each should take in her hand a burning taper of wax; and when the Superieure had given the signal, we all proceeded, by two and two, the younger sisters going first into the chœur, and the abbess entering last, leading the victim about to be offered at the shrine of superstition: the whole procession being visible to the congregation through the two gratings. We all were required to bow as we passed the upper grate, which opened on the high altar; and whilst

each sister took her place, the abbess led me to a seat prepared, just within the grate above mentioned, where she placed herself by me, in full view of the whole church. Then began the hymn, *O ! Gloriosa Domina excelsa super sidera*, &c., with certain short prayers, chaunted by the celebrant, who sat within the rails of the altar in all the pomp of violet and gold, with his splendid crosier by his side, and his gemmed and sparkling mitre on his venerable brow. A sermon then followed, from a pulpit nearly opposite to us, in which that which I was about to do was commended in a language and style which may be easily understood, and which tended not a little to keep up that spirit of false enthusiasm which had supported me, though not without some misgivings, during the last fifteen days. This sermon being concluded, many prayers in Latin, and sundry recitatives ensued ; after which the clothes which I was to put on being presented to the bishop, he sprinkled them with holy water, and blessed them, delivering them to the Superieure. I then knelt down, whilst the celebrant questioned me respecting my feelings and motives as to taking the veil—the questions and answers being all such as the church had dictated, and being in fact no other than a printed form. It was either then, or during some time of the service, my memory fails me in this particular,—that a lady, who sat near the altar, took my hand, in character of my godmother, and placed it within that of the celebrant. Madame Verani had been asked to be my godmother ; but as she had always opposed my resolution to take the veil, she could

not be prevailed upon to perform that office for me, although she thought it right to be present at the ceremony. Soon after having replied to the usual questions, I was led out of the church by the Supérieure to change my dress.

Thus terminated the first act of this solemn pantomime. It is to be supposed that at this time my hair was cut off, but as this operation required some time, it was put off till the next day, and my hair was only hid carefully under the cappe, or black band across the brow ; still, however, there was some bustle to get off my smart frock and ornaments, and to invest me with my new habit, before the various prayers and chantings, which one arranged for filling up this interval, were exhausted. We were, however, very expeditious, the hands of my assistants being well practised in this part of the drama, for I can call it no other ; and I was then brought back to my place before the altar, having my black robe without a girdle, and only a small veil, my burning taper being again put into my hand. Then followed other ceremonies, in which the celebrant, having blessed the scapulaire, the veil, the girdle, the cross, and other appendages of the sacred dress, which had not yet been put on, gave them to the abbess, who arranged them on me with no small parade, finishing off my bridal attire by a crown of mingled thorns and roses, which was placed over my veil.

I have taken a task upon me which I cannot complete, as these forms, unauthorized as they are by scripture, now appear to me so blasphemous and so puerile, that I cannot enlarge upon them any further.

I shall simply say, that the ceremony terminated, after we had all received the wafer from the hands of the celebrant, by my kissing the hand of the Superieure, and then passing round the chœur, and kissing all the sisters, more than one of whom seemed considerably affected at this part of the scene. Whilst I was thus passing round the chœur, the sisters were singing, *Ecce quam bonam et quam jucundam*; and, whilst still singing, we all withdrew from the chœur, the voices of the sisters being heard some time after we had quitted the church.

And now I was indeed a cloistered nun, and, although I had not taken the fatal black veil, I was, to all intents and purposes, as entirely bound as if I had; for how could I ever appear again amongst my former acquaintance, with such a blight on my reputation as that which I should necessarily incur by abandoning such a public profession as I had just made. I was aware of this immediately after the ceremony was concluded, and only wondered how it had happened that I had not seen the step which I had meditated, in the same light before it had taken place.

It was therefore in a melancholy mood that I followed the abbess in the parlour behind the grille, where I had first seen her; and when I there found that I was never more to behold my dear friend, Madame Verani, but through a grille, I felt a sadness stealing over me which I could not entirely conceal.

An elegant breakfast (of which, by the bye, I was to pay the cost) had been set out in the hall, into which I and my friend had been ushered when I first

visited the house, with an additional table within the grating, similarly furnished with cakes, sweatmeats, chocolate, and fruits. The guests without were Monseigneur l'Eveque, Monsieur and Madame Verani, with some other persons whom I had caused to be invited as her friends, Father Joachim, and several others of the clerical order, who either belonged to the establishment of Notre Dame de Misericorde, or were followers of the Bishop. Those within the grille consisted of myself, as queen of the day, the Superieure, and other elders of the house, but none of the sisters. The conversation during the breakfast was lively, and even facetious; Monseigneur conducting himself with the most gentlemanlike urbanity, and the bars, which separated the two parties, not seeming to be any hindrance to the freedom of conversation. Monsieur and Madame Verani and myself being the only persons present who were able to appear otherwise than gay. I say appear, for it was impossible that the gaiety of several of those then present could have been from the heart.

Before the party dispersed, Madame Verani asked permission to see me soon again, but was told that it was only once a month that the young ladies were permitted to see their friends.

I have forgotten to say that during the whole of the festivity I was addressed by the title of la Sposa, —a glorious title, indeed, when taken in the sense there intended, and one which, were it bestowed by Him who alone has a right to give it, is as far above all earthly titles as the east is from the west; but which, when bestowed by mortals in virtue of some

vain ceremony, becomes nothing but an impious and horrible blasphemy.

At length our spiritual father left us, Monsieur and Madame Verani took their leave, and the black curtain being drawn over the grating, I prepared to follow the lady Superieure into that part of the house into which I had not as yet been introduced.

And now, my reader must henceforward know me by the appellation of the sister Angelique, which is the name I chose, according to the intimated wishes of the Superieure, when I quitted that which had been given me by my parents ; but before we left the parlour, the company being gone, the Superieure directed me to give my crown to la Mere Assistante, to put aside in a safe place ; “and remember,” she added, “let the name be ticketed upon it :—you know for what purpose, daughter ?”

“No, indeed, Madame,” I replied.

She smiled, and la Mere Ursule laughed outright, laying her skinny hand on my shoulder, and saying, “The crown is put by for you to wear in your coffin, daughter,—it is the custom of the house. The daughters of the earth descend into the grave in their shrouds and burying attire ; but we wear the crowns which our Husband gave us in the day of our espousals.”

I made no reply to this, for I did not dare to trust my voice, feeling a degree of sadness creeping over me, which was only the more potent from the state of forced enthusiasm in which I had been for some hours past. The elders, no doubt, understood these symptoms, and therefore the Superieure hastened to

break up this more private conference, which she did with certain expressions of fondness, which, even at this early hour of my profession, began to fill my mind with nameless apprehension; for I already began to conceive that the pill must be bitter indeed which required so much to gild it. There was a sort of lurking triumph in the eye of la Mere Ursule, I thought, as she observed the caresses lavished upon me by her superior; and though I had often been thus caressed and flattered, yet I had never before felt myself so little inclined to receive these advances in good part. However, this scene was soon terminated by the abbess taking me by the hand, and leading me to my future companions.

It was the custom of the house to render the day of the profession of a new sister a period of as high glee as our secluded situation would permit. There was policy in this, because it became the interest of everyone who wished for a holiday to do all that in her lay to persuade any pretendante who might come in her way, or any sister of the white veil, to give her such a holiday. The sisters, on this occasion, always had a treat in the refectory, after which more hours of recreation were permitted them than at any other period;—indeed, they were left entirely to themselves till vespers, and they not unseldom spent the afternoon under the cedar trees, on a bank closely shorn, in the garden, which, in fine weather, (and it was a remarkably fine day in the month of June when I was professed,) was a most delightful situation.

The entertainment was already concluded in the

refectory, and the sisters were in the garden, and seated in various groups on this bank, when the Superieure, accompanied by la Mere Ursule and sister Annunciata, who joined us in the cloister, brought me in her hand to introduce me to those whom I looked upon as the companions of my future life. They all rose, and came forward as we appeared, and received me each with a kiss, and some of the elder ones with a blessing, solemnly pronounced, in the name of Notre Dame de Misericorde; after which the Superieure, having herself condescended to give me her hand to kiss, returned to the house with la Mere Ursule, the sister Annunciata remaining awhile behind her.

I expected that my first three acquaintances in the convent, the sisters Honorine, Josephine, and Marguerite, would have come forward on this occasion, on which I suddenly found myself among persons whose faces I had never seen before, but I was mistaken; they had kissed me indeed, but they extended their attentions no further. They were gathered round Annunciata, and I should have found myself considerably embarrassed, had not one of the sisters of the white veil gently taken my hand, and drawing me down on the grass, on which she was seated, whispered to me, "We are of the same rank and degree in the house, sister Angelique, and, perhaps you may find our society quite as agreeable as that of some persons of the higher orders; at any rate," she added, "we shall not annihilate you, and reduce you to a nonentity, by our superior sanctity." "For shame, Pauline," returned a white veil on my left-

hand, for I was already seated with the first who had spoken to me on my right—"will you never learn prudence?" and, leaning behind me, she whispered something in her companion's ear, which the other answered by a laugh, saying at the same time, "Nous verrons ;" and then addressing herself to me, "sister Angelique," she said, "shall I acquaint you with the state of things in this house, and explain some of our politics." "It would be much better for her to find them out herself," remarked the sister on my left, whose name it seems was Eustasie. By this time, two or more of the sisters of the white veil had joined our party, which was a little removed from the other groups, and being invited by Pauline, sate down with us ; and with them an elderly sister, who, it seems, had some sort of authority over the novices.

I had seen her several times, and she had been particularly busy whilst they were changing my dress. She was called la Mere Genefride ; she had a remarkably good-humoured countenance, and though I think I scarcely ever beheld an uglier face under a nun's hood, yet I loved that face from the first moment I saw it, and so did every young person who ever had any thing to do with it : she was an excellent person in her way ; and though a strict Papist, yet she had such kindness of heart, that even the cold policy of the Roman Catholic principle had never been able to deaden her feelings. She had, undoubtedly, a tendency to the principles of the Jansenists, for she always maintained that kindness and love were better calculated to turn the

young heart than coldness and severity ; but she was extremely ignorant ; her mind was not refined, and she carried her system of indulgence to such a degree, that she did not even always reprove what was really blameworthy in the young people ; but the Superieure winked at her indiscretions of this kind, as I afterwards found, because her influence over the novices was so great, that more were induced by her to remain in the house, and to take the black veil under that roof, than by any other person of the society ; and it must ever be remembered, that in the politics of the Church of Rome, the end always sanctifies the means.

There were five or six novices gathered together, apart from the other sisters, and la Mere Genefride in the midst of us ; and Pauline was beginning, as she said, to let me into some of the politics of the establishment, when sister Annunciata and sister Marguerite came arm-in-arm towards us, the latter addressing me, and saying something trivial respecting the beauty of the weather, whilst the former, reproving Pauline, asked her if she thought it becoming to withdraw the mind of la Sposa from the great engagement she had so lately undertaken, by conversing on indifferent subjects. “ Such a scene as you have witnessed to-day, my sister,” she added, “ ought to remind you of your own espousals, and of the important duties you then took upon yourself ; do let me entreat you not to engage sister Angelique to-day in vain discourse.”

“ I was but telling her of her duties,” replied Pau-

line, "and of what our Lord requires of us as his affianced bride."

"'Tis well," said Annunciata; and she turned away with her companion, and went towards the house.

"Now our Lady of Mercy forgive me for this hypocrisy," remarked Pauline, as soon as the other was out of hearing; "but that Annunciata, and those severe ones, would make hypocrites of all the saints in the calendar, if they had to deal with them."

"Peace," said la Mere Genefride; "it is a miracle in my eyes that you have not been put in penitence before this time, Pauline. You are much to blame for allowing yourself to speak so rashly."

"Remember, gracious mother," replied Pauline, "that some deference is due to a novice. Suppose that I should take it into my head to put on my secular habits again, and say good bye to you all."

"And say good bye to Paradise at the same time," replied la Mere Genefride; "is there no such a place as hell, daughter; remember Him to whom you are affianced; can he not avenge himself?"

"Ah! there is the rub," retorted the lively girl; "well, the Holy Virgin have mercy on us; but let me explain to sister Angelique how things are; I will tell no secrets I promise you. Well to begin—here we are; there are thirty sisters of the black veil, besides Madame, and la Sacristine, and la Mere Assistante, and la bonne Mere Genefride, and poor old Mere Aymee, who was sacristine time out of mind, till she could neither see nor hear, and the six

menials, and the five novices, these are our grand divisions."

"And I doubt not," said Eustasie, "that sister Angelique knows as much as this already."

"No:" I replied, "I did not know exactly the number of the professed; indeed, I always thought there were only twenty-nine."

"Umph!" said Pauline, "who told you there were only twenty-nine?"

"I have often counted them in the chœur," I replied.

"There are thirty, however," returned Pauline, "there is one you have not seen yet; for when a person is pretendante, they are not to see every thing: by the bye, I never knew a pretendante kept so close as you were; that is some new regulation, and a very good one too; very politic and discreet, without question."

"Will you be silent," said la Mere Genefride.

"Only one word more," returned Pauline, "I simply wish to tell sister Angelique that she will find herself more comfortable in associating with us, than with the sisters who have been longer in the house."

"Mum!" said the Mere Genefride, "do you see who is coming?"

It was la Mere Ursule, and it was tolerably clear that she was come to see what we were about. She addressed me by the name of la Sposa, and said, she rejoiced to see so much divine serenity, as she was pleased to say, on my countenance. "This is a blessed day, my daughter," she added, "for you;" and

she was proceeding to tell us what raptures she had herself experienced when she had thrown aside her secular habits, and entered into that holy engagement which, she trusted, would be the means of obtaining her a place in the household of her Lord for ever.

“Is there any body in this house now, my good mother,” said Pauline, in a meek tone, “who was present on that happy occasion?”

“What happy occasion?” asked the mother.

“When you were professed;” returned Pauline, dropping her eyelids and looking demure.

“Was ever a question so foolishly put as this!” replied la Mere Ursule, her whole sallow face becoming suffused with an angry glow: “do you think that I am as old as la Mere Aymee?—why, though I was quite a babe when I came here, and spent all my childhood in this house, yet I know no more of her profession than you do, who were not here twelve months since.”

“Oh! then I was mistaken,” replied Pauline.

“Not a bit of it—not a bit of it;” returned the other, “but I think I could tell you where you have made a mistake, and that of much more consequence than in my standing in the house.”

“And what may that be, mother?” asked Pauline, demurely, “will you please to enlighten my dark mind by your counsels, and by informing me where I am in error?”

“Why, I think,” said the old woman, with much bitterness, “that you mistook your vocation when you came to this house; and I must add, sister

Genefride, that you do not do as you should, when you allow so much licence to these young girls."

"Come away!" replied la Mere Genefride, "we will speak of these things elsewhere;" and the two seniors walked away; whilst Eustasie said—

"There, Pauline, you will have it now; why did you provoke la Mere Ursule? know you not her influence with Madame? you will certainly have a reproof."

"I am not afraid;" replied sister Pauline, "and what did I say, after all? but come with me," she said to me, "and I will show you la Mere Aymee; she is a good old creature, and I love her, and I would give my eyes to find out that la Mere Assistante was present at her profession: besides, la Mere Aymee is a curiosity. I love to hear her talk;" and she drew me towards a group of sisters who were sitting quietly at another end of the green bank; some of them having books in their hands, others seeming to be engaged in that sort of namby-pamby discourse which fills up the vacant hours of those ordinary characters which make up the principal proportion of the members of religious houses; and there was enough of matter for them to fill up the leisure of that day, namely, the garniture of my toque, the pattern of the embroidery of Monseigneur l'Eveque, the pates and gateaux at the dejeuner, and the cut of the new face which was just introduced among them.

The sister Pauline brought me up to these, and addressing them with some common-place remark, she sat down by them, and directed my attention to a little decrepit figure which was in the midst of

them, though apparently taking no part in the discourse. "That is la Mere Aymee," whispered Pauline, "I will engage her in conversation; now listen to her, she will amuse you;" and being seated on the grass, she put her mouth to the ear of the old nun, and said, in a distinct tone, "and how does la Mere Aymee carry herself to-day; how does this weather affect her rheumatic pains?"

Being thus addressed, the old lady lifted up her head, and exhibited a set of features wrinkled and wizened beyond what I had ever seen: but what struck me the most in her appearance was, that although the lines of age were so deeply graven on her features, there was an expression of vacancy in her eye which seemed entirely to disagree with these indications of a long protracted pilgrimage on earth. "Did you speak, my dear," said she in reply to the voice of sister Pauline, "did any one speak?"

"It was me, mother," returned Pauline, "I was asking after your rheumatism."

"Ay!" she replied, "my pains, my daughter, they are blessed, since they are endured for him we love; and he will accept them too, as proofs of my affection for him: and they will be so many merits to plead in my favour: but I fear they are all too few."

A slight shudder seemed to pass over the frame of Pauline, as the mother spoke, but rallying herself immediately, she said, "we wanted to know, mother, if you remember the day of your profession."

"Do I remember the day of my profession, my espousals," replied the old nun, "to be sure I do; it was on the Fete of Cunegonde, the last Sunday of

the Carnival: for I remember that Careme was so late that year, that we had green peas on Mardi gras."

"That was bad management," whispered Pauline to one of the sisters.

"And why so?" asked the person spoken to.

"Because peas are not flesh; and they would have mended the dinner on Mercredi de Cendres," returned Pauline.

A laugh followed this remark, which certainly was not made much in the spirit of a true daughter of holy mother church; after which the questioning of the old religieuse proceeded. "Was la Mere Ursule in the house when you were professed?" asked Pauline.

"Ay!" replied the old lady, who only heard part of the question, "he was the celebrant who professed me; I remember him well, by this token, for he was a gracious and godly man, he commended the chocolate which was served at breakfast, and declared he had never tasted its like but once, and that was at the Cardinal Paoli's at Rome."

"Chu, chu!" exclaimed Pauline, "what's all this to the purpose. I would give my ears, for, in virtue of my vow I have little else to give, to ascertain that la Mere Ursule assisted at the profession of her venerable sister, if it were but as a pretendante, and the old lady can think of nothing but green peas and chocolate; but I will get it out of her if I can:" and putting her mouth to her ear, "Mother," she exclaimed, "Mother, I say, tell me, is there any one in this house who was present when you put away your secular habits.

“My secular habits!” replied the mother, “did I ever wear any? Was I not devoted in the cradle? Was I not taken from the breast into the arms of our Mother of Mercy? Do I remember ever stepping beyond the boundary of these sacred walls?” And she crossed herself, and raised her lustreless eyes—mumbling her Paternoster with a rapidity which long habit only could have given; and then sinking again into that semblance of almost lifeless apathy and imbecility, from which Pauline had with difficulty aroused her, and from which she again awakened her but a moment afterwards.

“Mother,” my new acquaintance said, “I was speaking of your profession; and asking you, if there is any one now in the house who was present then?”

“It is fifty-eight years ago, child,” replied the old lady, “fifty-eight years and four months; and there are none here now who saw me assume the bridal crown. Fifty-eight years is a long time—a long, long time to think of! ay, a long time to bear the weight of sin and infirmity, and to feel that the stain of guilt remains, after years of penitence and pain! And I have seen, in those years, young blooming things, like you, and you, and you”—and she extended her skinny finger towards one, and another, and a third of us, as she spoke—“grow thin, and pale, and wan, and die, and pass away. I have made friends, young, warm, kindly friends, and lost them one by one, until all I ever loved have passed away, and are laid in their cold graves, to crumble to dust, each with her bridal crown bound on her brow. And there has no one arisen lately among ye all, to fill the

place which is cold and vacant here;" and she laid her hand upon her heart, and sighed, and mumbled another prayer, and then, looking round again, continued her address: "And what are you, and you, and you, to me? God help you! Our Lady of Misericorde remember you! And may you all be blessed! But what have you to do—to bear with me? I am neither your mother nor grandmother; there is no connecting link of blood, or of former services, between us. I am old, and deaf, and dull—*Libera me, Domina?*" And her voice ceased to be audible, though her lips continued to move for some time after.

"Do but hear her," said Pauline, looking earnestly at me; "does not it cut your heart to hear her? God help her! and God help us, also! But listen—she speaks again, and she has forgotten that we are present."

"I cannot tell what they have done to her," she said; "she was the last, and Agnace—poor Agnace—was the first. But she is not dead, though like one dead,—so pale, so cold, so still." And the venerable religieuse looked round inquiringly; but no one answered, and every eye was cast down.

"What is she talking of?" I said.

No one spoke but Pauline, who replied, "Ask her."

"Who are you speaking of, mother?" I asked.

"Clarice," she replied; "she was a pretty creature, when she first came; like a young rose-bud just opening. And she was so kind, so tender to me! She was the last young creature that seemed akin to me—that seemed to belong to me."

“And what is become of her?” I asked. “Who is she?”

The old nun made no answer, and I addressed myself to the rest of the party, but saw embarrassment so evidently traced on every countenance, that I did not press my inquiry. Yet, turning to la Mere Aymee again, I said, “It is fifty-eight years since you were professed, and you have never been beyond these walls since that period; how does the time appear to you, dear mother: does it seem long or short? How can you distinguish one year from another in memory? You must hardly have any dates or epochs in your life.”

I was obliged to repeat this question in other words, before she could comprehend it; at length she replied, “It is a long time, to be sure—a long lingering time to think of! There have been three Superieures since then, and our confessors have been changed many times, though Father Benedict was a long while with us, but he went at last. And I remember when this bank was laid down in grass—the vines ran over it when I came here first,—there is no one here who remembers that change: and the pines have crept up over the brow of the hill, since I can remember;—when I first came, one could only see the tops of them peeping up from behind.”

I was going to exclaim, “What a life is this! It would be better to toil in the fields, than to endure this horrible monotony;” but, recollecting myself, I said, “You have had much delight, no doubt, in thinking that you are leading a life so agreeable

to the will of God—a life wholly devoted to the service of your Maker ; have not you, mother ?”

“ Truly, truly, daughter,” she replied, and crossed herself ; “ it is my hope that I have lived in that way which is pleasing to Him of whom I am the affianced bride. Listen, daughter ! the holy Virgin dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem, and her companions were the first, among the sinful daughters of men, who were called to the profession which we have taken upon ourselves. We are the spouses of the blessed Lord ; the veil we have received is that in which we shall appear with acceptance before the judgment-seat of Christ ; and the crown of thorns with which we were crowned on the day of our espousals, will then be changed into a crown of glory, which we shall have merited by our fidelity to those vows made in our youth ; and these, my daughter, are my hopes and consolation. Nevertheless, I would willingly obtain that perfection which may render the fire of purgatory less necessary. Yet I greatly fear,” and the old nun trembled as she spoke, “ that by no effort of mine shall I ever be able to purify my soul from venial faults ; and yet I observe the seven hours of prayer during the day, as well as those of the night, although I am hardly able to hobble down the stairs, and I repeat the seven penitential psalms three times in the day. And, indeed, my daughter,” she added, still addressing me, “ if we who are set free from the cares of the world, find it so difficult to fulfil our duties, how can those poor creatures perform them, who are perplexed with earthly concerns ?”

How, indeed! thought I; and I perceived that there were others present who were equally impressed with this remark, and not only impressed, but perplexed, not being able to reconcile the various contradictions which presented themselves to their minds, in a religion which, the more it is thought of, seems the less consistent with itself. But reflection, and intellectual light, and reason, have ever been inimical to the doctrines of the apostate church. It is true that human reason teaches nothing better; but the dominion of Popery is exercised over the passions—and here its sway is great, and hence the very individuals who have seemed to escape from it, during those periods of their lives when reason is most strong, are caught again by it when the fear of death and judgment assails them.

A bell ringing at that moment, broke up our conference; it was for “*la goute*,” which is a slight refreshment served in a religious house in the afternoon. Not being hungry, I asked permission of *la Mere Genefride*, to whom I was directed to apply, to remain alone in the garden during the repast, which request was instantly granted, accompanied with a commendation of my desire of solitude. All the sisters therefore left me, and I was glad to be alone; for I felt my mind strangely agitated, being drawn as it were two ways,—for, whilst what *la Mere Aymee* had said respecting that which was to follow death, affected me on one hand, the idea of a long eventless life in the place where I then was, filled me with terror and apprehension on the other. Whilst occupied with these thoughts, I sought a long shady path

between the cedar trees and the lofty wall, but had scarcely traced the length of the alley, when I arrived at a grotto of shell work in the angle of the wall, before which was a crucifix, and in the interior, in a niche of rock-work, a figure, as large as life, of the Virgin, with her infant in her arms; a little altar and marble candelabrum being placed before the figure. There was also an inner chamber to this grotto,—adorned with sundry superstitious devices, and round this inner chamber was a stone bench, on which I sat down to meditate. I had not, however, been alone many minutes, when I heard a step, and the next moment Pauline appeared, her face being all bathed in tears. She started on seeing me, and was retreating, when I, detaining her, entreated her to tell me what had happened. “I was taken with a faintness,” she said, “and they gave me leave to come out into the air.”

“Sit down then,” I replied, “you will be better immediately. But ah, Pauline!” I added, “this is not all; you continue to sob and to tremble. What has happened?” and I put my arms round her and endeavoured to soothe her. I know not what expressions I might have used, but, whatever they were, she seemed affected by them,—for she turned her face to me with animation, and said, “Is it possible that you should have any feeling left! and yet I forget, you have only been with us a very short time—you have not dwelt in this cold atmosphere so long as to have become a stone: but I forget again—you have been admitted only to day into the interior of the family; you do not as yet know all the

secrets of this frightful prison-house—you have not yet seen what I have seen—you are not aware of the self-tortures inflicted, and required by the church—all, all of which are felt to be so inadequate for securing the end in view, that it often happens, that whilst the poor body sinks beneath the intolerable pressure of fasts and vigils, the mind is not delivered from the horrors of despair; and yet if these things are not endured—if some merits are not thus obtained—what is to become of the soul, the immortal, never-dying soul! Oh, sister Angelique! how dreadful is this religion!”

“In the name of our holy mother,” I exclaimed, “command yourself. What is this you say, but blasphemy?”

“True,” she replied, “I speak unadvisedly; God forgive me: but had you seen what I saw but a moment since, you would have felt with me. You do not know this sweet Clarice—you have not observed the cloud which, for some weeks past, has been cast over her existence—you have not known how often of late she has been banished from our table—you are not aware that she has not been in the chœur since you arrived, though none but those initiated in the secrets of the Superieure can tell how she has been disposed of when not seen—you did not know that she was not present at our repast this morning, nor how surprised I was to see her come in and take her place at the table just now, so meek, so sad, so fair,—that sweet pale face, lovely as a weeping madonna, being set and attuned, as it were, to suffering—nor how indignant I was when I beheld that

haughty Annunciata gaze on her, with scorn depicted on every line of her face—scorn, and jealousy, and hatred, and suspicion, and every detestable passion.—Alas! Angelique, I cannot witness these scenes, and retain my composure.”

I was not only terrified, but stupified, by all this. “Oh!” I exclaimed, “that I had known you before I had laid aside my secular habit, that I had heard all this only yesterday: but the vows we have already taken do not bind us for life. We may yet lay aside these veils.”

Pauline shook her head. “I was led to think as you do, once,” she said, “but how is that to be,—how should we be thought of in the world, were we to return to it? What catholic is there who would not despise us? and had we even affianced ourselves thus publicly to a mere human being, how could we answer it to our consciences to abandon him? Do you remember the answer you made this very day to the bishop, when he said to you, Have you the will and the strength to persist constantly under the gentle yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sole consideration of the love and fear of God?”

I sighed from the very bottom of my heart: but what could I answer?—what could I say? But I was anxious to hear more respecting the sister Clarice, and I therefore did what in me lay to engage Pauline to tell me what she knew of this case, which had so much affected her: neither had I much difficulty in inducing the warm hearted girl to be quite as communicative as I could wish. She had been, it seems, several months in the house, and had made her re-

marks with that deep discernment which persons use who are strongly interested in what they see: but I shall repeat what she said with more regard to order than she used in her discourse. The Superieure, she said, had been about fifteen years at the head of the household, there being not above eight of the sisters who had been there before her. This lady, it seems, was not generally disliked, and made herself particularly agreeable to the pretendantes, and even to the novices, but was charged with undue partiality and favouritism. Her first favourite had been a sister Angelique, who had died only three or four years after her profession. Her next favourites were Annunciata and Clarice, two of the most beautiful young women who had ever been remembered in the convent. Annunciata was of very high blood, an Italian, and distantly related to the abbess. She had entered the convent at St Siffren, in a paroxysm of displeasure against her father; who being left a widower by the death of her mother, had married again without her approbation: but it was asserted by the abbess, that she had afterwards taken the veil from truly pious feelings; and her conduct, which was full of zeal for the church, seemed, as my young informant said, to confirm this assertion of the abbess. Clarice was the daughter of a Sardinian lady of rank, and an English gentleman, on whose marriage it had been settled that the daughters should be brought up in the faith of the true church, and the sons as Protestants; but this marriage, as might have been expected, having proved unhappy, the lady had returned to her own country, a few years afterwards, bringing Clarice

with her, where the child was brought up according to the faith of her mother. This lady, however, becoming a widow when Clarice was about fifteen, she resolved on marrying again : previously to which she had placed her daughter under the care of the Superieure of Notre Dame de Misericorde. The consequence was, what the mother had hoped, namely, that the young girl was induced to take the veil,—Annunciata, then already professed, having been supposed to be the principal means of inducing her to take this step.

“I have heard,” said Pauline, “that when sister Clarice took the veil, she was the most lovely creature ever seen ; having all the delicate bloom of the beauties of her father’s land, connected with all that is admirable in the ladies of her own country. Madame, used to call her her rosebud : but that bloom is past, though she is not yet twenty ; and here,” she added, “comes the strange part of my story. Annunciata and Clarice were, before the full profession of the latter, such intimate friends, and so beloved by the Superieure, so constantly on each side of her, that it was a common saying with the sisters—Here comes the lady, with her rose in one hand and her lily in the other. But there was some strange tale about a little billet, conveyed through the grating in a dried sweetmeat to sister Annunciata, which I could never understand, but which Clarice is charged with having told to the Superieure in betrayal of her friend, and this charge so alienated Annunciata from her, that from that period she has been her determined enemy. And this enmity,” continued Pauline,

“becomes every day more and more apparent, and where it will end heaven knows, for such is the influence of sister Annunciata over Madame, that she has lately entirely alienated her from Clarice; and there seems an inveteracy in the Superieure’s feelings towards this last, which it is impossible to account for. Sister Clarice has, however, again and again declared that she is innocent respecting the sweetmeat, and I hope she is so,” added Pauline, “for I never could have pardoned her betrayal of a friend.”

I agreed in this sentiment, and she went on.

“The history of the bonbon might have first caused the breach between the friends, but there is more at the bottom of the treatment Clarice now receives than this childish tale, which is now two or three years old. Clarice certainly began to lose favour with the Superieure about the time when it was said that she had betrayed some confidence of her friend, but she was not treated as she now is, even when I first came here. There was at that time in the house, a certain widow lady, a Madame Barthelemis, who came here in great trouble, and held out to the community an expectation that she would profess; and she had a bad illness in the house, and sister Clarice was much with her: but before she was quite recovered, she got a letter, informing her of the death of a friend, who had left her a large addition to her fortune. This letter, it seems, changed all her plans; from that time nothing more was said by her of the charms of a cloistered life, and she waited only till her health was restored to return to the world, in which she was then enabled to appear with

some credit. Madame was excessively angry with her, and the coldness which was shown to Clarice after her departure, was attributed by the sisters to her having expressed some regard for this woman; but this person has been gone four months, and the disgrace of sister Clarice appears daily more evident; and this day, as I tell you, when she took her place at the table, sister Annunciata on one side of her, and la Mere Ursule on the other, shrank from her as if her touch were contamination. We had before observed that she kept very much apart from us, but we never saw any thing so decided as to-day; yet I believe, and I have several reasons for thinking so, that she has been made to suffer many secret penances for weeks past, if I can judge from the change in her appearance, for she is become miserably attenuated, and there is not now a shade of colour even in her lips."

"Of what nature," I asked, "are the penances to which we are liable?"

"To none, or at least to such only as may be easily endured, whilst we wear the white veil," replied Pauline; "but heaven only knows what those unhappy ones endure, who, being bound for ever to this house, may chance to incur the displeasure of the rulers. These things are kept as secret from uninitiated eyes and ears, as the proceedings of that terrible and nameless tribunal of which we only hear in broken sentences, and which is seldom spoken of with impunity."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "but this is sacrilege against the Holy Mother Church. Sister Pau-

line, can you suppose that such a woman as Madame would be guilty of secret cruelty?"

"Our Lord only knows;" replied Pauline, "but power and pride and mystery are frightful things: yet I am rash! Oh! that I could restrain this ever-erring tongue,—I perhaps am offending against the innocent; and if the alternative lies between misery on earth—for to be here is misery,—for a few long weary years, and misery in purgatory, perhaps till the end of time, the Superieure, no doubt, does right when she compels her daughters to endure penitences and pains, however severe, rather than permit them to continue even in venial sins. But oh! my sister, this religion is an awful, fearful thing; a miserable, a terrifying consideration; and when we are told that we, the espoused of Christ, may, through the imperfection of our nature and of our duties, be condemned to ages of suffering in the flames of purgatory, what can we think? how are our hearts to be lifted up in praise and gratitude to our Redeemer? how do we feel ourselves to be objects of the divine love? Can we wonder that worldly persons should endeavour to throw off all thoughts respecting such a system of horrors as this? for, truly, the more a poor soul endeavours to set itself at rest by meritorious duties, such as the holy church enforces, the more it feels itself bewildered and perplexed."

In reply to all this, I heaved a deep long sigh, and then said, "Do you suppose that the mass of the sisters in this establishment are as miserable as you describe yourself to be?"

"No!"—replied Pauline; "no, because they are

not formed either for misery or happiness. I could enumerate a dozen or more of these good honest bodies, who never think at all. They trust the concerns of their souls to Father Joachim, and do as he bids them without inquiry ; and as to the rest, they amuse themselves as best they may ; and when one or more of them can escape observation, presently all their heads are under one hood, and then, eh ! comme on jase—and oh, what little matters serve them for discourse : I have known the pattern of an embroidered stool suffice for that purpose from one morn to another. Well, and such as these are of the right stuff for nuns, granting that they can sit, or stand, or kneel in one posture, without qualms, for a sufficient length of time. No one should ever be a religieuse who has either warmth of feeling or susceptible nerves,” added the lively girl ; “but if it must be so, it must.”

We thought, at this instant, that we heard a step. Pauline immediately drew her veil over her face, and threw herself back ; “If they come in, say I am fainting ; for your life don’t repeat what I have said ;” and we both remained quite still till the step had passed. Pauline then springing up, said, “Don’t follow me ; I shall not be seen again till I can appear at the other end of the garden ;” and she rushed out of the grotto, leaving me more sad, if possible, than she had found me.

CHAPTER III.

A CONVENT LIFE.

I WILL not unnecessarily abridge my history, yet at the same time I would avoid being tedious. I should, however, wish to give one outline of a day spent according to the rules of our house, before I enter upon more active, and I trust, more interesting scenes; but I will not be more minute than necessary.

I shall begin with a call which I received whilst still meditating in the grotto, to the service, called vespers, supposed to be a little before sun-set; this service occupied us about one hour, and consisted of an anthem to the Virgin and several prayers. From vespers we went to supper in the refectory, or eating apartment; our supper was simple, and we all sat at one long table, according to our degrees in the establishment. I looked in vain during this meal, for a figure answering to what I had heard of the sorrowful but beautiful Clarice. One of the sisters read during the meal from the "Lives of the Saints," which are arranged for all the days of the year. I remember that it was the history of St Herbert and St Claude which was read that evening. The Superieure took occasion, at the termination of the lecture, to derive such morals from these lectures as she thought them most proper to convey; and these

deductions, of course, all tended to prove that we ought to imitate, and even, if possible, to excel these holy persons in the austerity of their lives, and in the intenseness of their self-imposed sufferings.

Oh ! who can describe the misery inflicted by the apostate church on her unhappy children. With all her gaudy external trappings, there exists not on earth a tyrant so severe as this ; and the more sincere her votary, the more cruel, bloody, and severe her pressure upon him ; but let me proceed with the account of this my first twenty-four hours within the rules of the house. Supper being finished, we again proceeded to the chœur, to the service called complines, after which we retired to bed ; this was about nine o'clock ; but I had hardly fallen asleep, before la Mere Genefride, knocking at my door, called me to the officium nocturnum. I hurried on my clothes, half asleep as I was, and stepping out into the gallery, where a lamp was always burning, I saw the dark figures of the sisters passing down to the ante-chœur, in which we always assembled. The poorest captive in a dungeon, thought I, sleeps in peace during the hours of darkness ; but I rejected the blasphemous thought, and accompanied my companions into the chœur. The church was lighted up, and the solemn anthem, intonated by the officiating priest, and taken up by the sisters, revived, for a time, my sinking spirits, for I felt that I had in my haste taken upon me an intolerable burthen ; but the service was not very long, and I returned to my bed and slept again till just before sun-rise, when I was called to the laudes ; I lay down a very little while after this service. At

half-after five we all arose and made our beds, according to the rules of the house, but my broken sleep had not refreshed me, and my spirits were deeply dejected. At six o'clock we were all again in the chœur; the Superieure then read a passage to us from a selection taken from the gospel; it was "Mary hath chosen the better part;" this passage, she informed us, applied to the Virgin, and was spoken of her, though by the heretics referred to Mary the sister of Lazarus; and having thus delivered herself of this false application of scripture, we were all to meditate upon it for an hour, kneeling on our knees, and having nothing to lean against; according to the principle of the church, "the more pain the more merit." I know not how the other sisters felt themselves, or how their meditations proceeded, but for my part I could think of nothing but of the pain in my back and knees, and the sickness of my stomach: to be sure, habit does much, but I have known many sisters who could never go through this exercise without extreme suffering; but what was the use of complaining; all that ever could be got by complaining was this cold remark, If the Almighty does not choose to render this duty easy to you, you must submit to his will; he can give strength, and he can withhold it; and if it is his will to exercise you with suffering here, you may hope that you will be spared in proportion hereafter." A service followed this hour of meditation, after which, those who chose to breakfast found it prepared in the refectory, but I soon perceived that the most strict of the sisters never took any refreshment at this time. There was

half an hour's recreation after this, and some of us walked in the garden, but on the day I am describing, I went up to my cell and indulged in a fit of weeping, which somewhat relieved my bursting heart. Oh ! how did I lament my own precipitancy. But this half hour being over we were assembled again, and all proceeded, in threes and fours, to occupy ourselves with the affairs of the house ; to some was given the care of the sacristy, to others the linen, to others the clothes ; formerly, when there had been pupils in the establishment, some of the sisters had been accustomed to give them instruction at these hours, but there were none at that time ; those sisters who had none of these peculiar employments, occupied themselves in various works during this period, each in her own cell, as was supposed, although it often happened that we, who were novices, contrived to get two or three together, feeling sure that la Mere Genefride would not be very severe if she detected us, for although she never failed to reprove us on these occasions, perhaps to satisfy her own conscience, yet we never heard any more of her displeasure. The works with which we occupied ourselves at this time were various ; some of us made sweetmeats, and dried them in the sun ; others artificial flowers ; some made purses, and bags, and covers of books, adorned with beads ; these were sent to Turin and sold : others embroidered dresses of the priests ; some dressed little virgins of wax, and placed infant Christs in their arms, and made shrines for them of card-board and straw, and others

cut out and emblazoned those little lace-like papers which you must all have seen.

Some of these hours which I spent thus quietly in my cell, with Pauline by my side, my dear warm hearted Pauline, were the happiest I ever experienced in the convent; and I trust that they were not all without profit:—but to go on with my journal,—at nine we were called again into the chœur, to adore the sacrament or host. At ten we dined altogether, as we had supped, in the refectory, some one reading aloud a book approved by the church, the nature of which may be easily conceived: after which we were left to ourselves, although under close surveillance till noon. Then came another service called sextes, after which each of us read apart some book put into our hands by the Superieure, till two o'clock, when we were assembled at the slight repast called goute; then came the service designated nones, after which it was the custom of the family to assemble in the presence of the Superieure, to receive her instruction and give an account of what each had read during the morning. Thus am I come round again to nearly the same hour of the day from which I set out, viz. the hour before vespers, at which time I was summoned with the rest into the presence of Madame. I was introduced into a large gothic hall, hung round with various paintings, representing those transactions in the supposed life of the virgin, whereupon her feasts are founded, beginning with her nativity and ending with her assumption; which tablets, in all their blasphemous absurdities, were at that time as venerable in my eyes as if the very pat-

terns of them had been exhibited to the artist in the same manner as that of the tabernacle to Moses : for it must be remembered that at that period I had never opened a Bible. The floor of this apartment was covered with fine matting. Madame sate at a table on a sort of dais, at the upper end of the room—such was the pompous solemnity of those days—and all the members of the household, that is, all whom I had already seen, were ranged according to their respective stations and standings in the family, round the room ; Pauline, as the next above me in rank, being close by my side.

It must be observed that I had not yet seen Clarice, and it was natural for me, on this occasion, to look anxiously for her ; but there was not a single face on which my eye could rest for a moment with the idea that it beheld this interesting person. In the meantime the Superieure, after a short dry cough and a muttered prayer, addressed us all in these words—“My daughters, remember that you have a God to adore, a Jesus Christ to imitate, all the angels to honour, the holy virgins and the saints to pray to, a soul to save, virtues to exercise, sins to expiate, a paradise to gain, an eternity to consider, a world to understand, devils to fear, passions to conquer, death to suffer, and the judgment to undergo.” This I afterwards found was a regular form used in these meetings ; which being pronounced, she proceeded to inform us, that she was not going to question us as usual on what we had read, having an affair of deep interest to consult us upon. She next entered largely upon the place which had been ap-

pointed her in the church, viz. that of a spiritual mother, to whom the care of the souls of many daughters had been confided ; expatiating on the cares, and anxieties, and painful duties of her office ; describing the delight she felt when she saw her children walking in obedience to the church, and her anguish in seeing any of those, her beloved daughters, departing from the way in which they should go. She then proceeded to point out all the enemies which the members of the church had to encounter in their passage through life, viz. the world, the flesh, and the devil ; enlarging on the snares of the world, and the happiness of those who, like the present sisterhood, were delivered from its delusions ; making nearly the same animadversions on the second description of trials, viz. those that proceed from the flesh, though to this head she added much on the duty of mortifying the outward man, by penance and fastings ; but being come to her last head, she opened her book, and read what was therein contained. “ The universal church always has, and always will have enemies to combat, but she has always triumphed : the infernal powers make new efforts against her every day, but they will never prevail. The holy church on earth has enemies within and without her bosom ; but not to enumerate her trials from infidels, Jews, heretics, schismatics, and the excommunicated, she has trials to undergo from evil spirits, who endeavour to destroy her members, not only by engaging them in heresy and corruption of life, but by a thousand other artifices, which are suited to the various temperaments of the

persons whose destruction they meditate. Who has not heard of Antoine, the blessed father of the solitary saints, who was horribly ill used by demons, insomuch so that he dared not to enjoy the consolation of sleep, and in consequence would watch for many nights together. We have examples of other holy persons being thus assaulted," she continued, closing the book at the same time, "and I believe that even in this day many Christians are tried in the same way, and that the number of those who support themselves in these sore trials are very few." Here she paused; and several of the older nuns, being encouraged to speak by the eyes of the abbess being directed towards them, began to repeat stories in confirmation of what the Superieure had asserted, each relater making her tale more wonderful than that which had gone before, whilst the younger persons present wondered, and trembled, and crossed themselves; and one, more considerate than the rest, inquired what could be done to enable a person to resist these attacks of the demon.

"We must watch and pray without ceasing," replied the Superieure, "die to ourselves, and sustain ourselves without fainting, in the narrow road: we must seek the assistance of the church, which moans as a dove over her children about to perish; and we must submit ourselves to her spiritual authority; and not only submit ourselves, but those whom we love best, if they should be found to be in the like circumstances, that they may be instructed, and exhorted, and corrected, and punished, in order that they may

be snatched, as burning brands, from the power of the devil."

A sort of groan of approbation followed this speech: but I observed that sister Annunciata neither lifted up her eyes, or uttered a sound. I could feel, however, that Pauline trembled, as she stood next to me. Something is coming, I thought, as I was all attention—of what nature can it be? and I perceived that my feelings of interest were participated by many in the room.

After each sister had told her story, that is, each one who had a story to tell, there was a pause and a dead silence, during which nothing was heard but now and then a short dry cough of the Superieure, who seemed almost at a loss what next to say. At length, however, she spoke:—her address, of which I cannot recollect the words, was to this effect: that she had lately suffered cruelly from a circumstance which could not have escaped the observation of the sisters, viz. the extraordinary change which had taken place in the appearance and manner of her beloved daughter Clarice—how suddenly she had lost her cheerfulness, and her delight in her religious duties; expatiating on the coldness and reserve towards her companions, and above all, her resolution not to open her heart to her spiritual mother, although she had sought her confidence with prayers and tears. "I have, for some weeks past," continued the lady, "endeavoured to bear the burthen of this affliction in silence, trusting that the symptoms which I have observed in the unhappy young woman, and which I can only attribute to some demoniacal influence,

would yield to the remedies which I insisted upon the unfortunate young person making use of: but as these symptoms, so far from giving way, become daily more apparent, I have thought it necessary to assemble the family, that you, my dear sisters and children, may add your counsels to mine, that you may unite with me, in entreating the Mother of Mercy to intercede with her Son in behalf of this unfortunate one, and that you may be guards upon each other, to prevent any intercourse with the miserable creature in question. But before we proceed to determine upon the manner in which we are to conduct ourselves towards this deluded young woman, it is my wish that you should enlighten my mind by any private remarks you may have been enabled to make upon the conduct of this unhappy person."

The abbess then looked at the sister Annunciata. The young lady raised her fine eyes, on being thus addressed, and with a mildness of manner, which pleased me at the time, begged that she might be spared the painful duty of speaking of one who had once been dear to her as the heart which beat in her bosom.

The Superieure admitted her plea, and looked to la Mere Ursule, who, calling on others to witness the truth of what she said, declared that she had lately observed in sister Clarice an evident attempt to shrink from every duty and every holy form, which her Lord requires of those who are his affianced ones. "Who has lately heard her sweet voice, as formerly, leading the whole sisterhood in the litanies of our holy Mother?" she asked. "Who has seen

her make the sign of the holy cross? And I am also well assured," continued the old nun, "that even when she would have been thought to have dipped her fingers in the holy water, she has taken good care that it should not touch them."

Several of the sisters, in reply to this appeal of la Mere Ursule, confessed that they had observed many indications of this kind, and been shocked by them; and these facts being established, the next inquiry was, What could have occasioned these extraordinary symptoms?

The reply of the Superieure was—"The influence of the demon; who," she added, "was no doubt admitted into her heart, when, through her attachment to that worldly person, Madame Barthelemis, she ceased to watch and pray." And the lady then proceeded to enlarge upon the duties of prayer and fasting, adding, that she had lately been sorry to observe that the private altar of the house had not been frequented, as formerly, by the devout sisters; though she remembered a time in which several in the family were so thoroughly devoted, that they never used their hands excepting in prayer. She then diverged to another subject, namely, the posture which ought to be used in prayer, and the manner in which the hands should be held during the times of devotion. But, returning again to the principal topic, she plainly informed us that she believed sister Clarice to be under demoniacal influences; hence that she could neither pray, nor cross herself, nor use holy water, nor sing the litanies, nor perform any Christian exercise whatever; and that she considered

it was a decided duty of the community to hold no intercourse with her, either by word or look; not to eat with her, nor be seen in her company; "although," she added, "we may all, singly and unitedly, pray for her deliverance. And may the holy Mother of God hear our intercessions! In the mean time," continued the Superieure, "let not a word of what is past ever transpire to those without. These things bring disgrace upon a sacred community—they argue some defect in holiness of life; and when my lord the bishop next honours us with a visit, I will consult him; that is, if the case of our unfortunate daughter and sister be not by that time ameliorated by the methods which the church prescribes in difficulties of this kind. Some Superieures, I know, would take severer measures than I shall choose to adopt; but I am willing to try kindness first. I would wish to draw back the lost one with the cords of love; I should be sorry to use corporal confinement to this unhappy creature. Compel me not, therefore, my children, to such a measure, by your attempting to communicate with the miserable and fallen sister. Neither would I, as yet, wish to treat her as an excommunicated person, although I have of late, by the advice of the reverend Father Joachim, caused her to absent herself from our society, thinking that perhaps certain private services, in my own particular chapel, would bring more benefits to her soul than she could obtain by mingling with us. But the father, not seeing that the desired result has ensued, and indeed fearing the effect of too much solitude for one who, it is thought, is too fami-

liar with the spiritual enemy, has advised that she should again be present at the services in the church; though I cannot request my holy daughters to sit down again with her at the same table, as the father advised, observing how her presence affected some of them yesterday afternoon. She shall therefore present herself in the chœur, but she shall not take her place with her pure and holy sisters, till she is restored to the divine favour by a long and deep repentance."

The abbess then rose, having pronounced a blessing on the assembly, and taking the arm of Annunciata, walked slowly out of the room, leaving us to give free utterance to our feelings on what had passed, for there were few amongst us who were not more or less convinced of the truth of all that our Superieure had said to us, and of the necessity of taking some decided measures with the poor victim of these demoniacal delusions. Even Pauline, who had lately been so angry at the manner in which this poor Clarice was treated, acknowledged that, if it were true that the unhappy sister could not endure the approach of the holy water, there must needs be something very much amiss with her.

"It is a certain and incontrovertible token," said la Mere Aymee, to whom one of the sisters had been explaining such part of the discourse as she had not heard, "that a person is under the power of the demon, when he cannot bear the sprinkling of the benediction. I remember that this was one of the first symptoms observed in Agnace,—but that was a long time

since, when I was first made sacristine : there was a great deal of talk about it then."

"Agnace?" repeated one of the younger sisters, "Who was she, mother?"

"Were you not talking of her?" returned the mother, "did you not say that Agnace—"

"The good mother is doting," exclaimed la Mere Ursule, "we were talking of poor sister Clarice. Do you hear, sister?"—and she put her mouth close to her ear, "we are saying that it is a bad sign in Clarice that she cannot touch holy water."

"And did not I say the same?" replied the old religieuse. "There can be no worse; and have I not often told you, how that I once heard of an old monk of Laghetto, called Zephitin, who was in such a way at one time, that if one did but touch him with a feather dipped in eau benite, he would begin to tremble and quake all over, as if he had been in his death-throes? But he was prayed for by the community, and Monseigneur l'Eveque came all the way from Nice up the valley, with many brethren, all in their robes, to exorcise the evil spirit. And he was as good a man as ever, when the demon left him; though I have heard say he would take the tremblings again at times; and it was always observed that there was a mist rising out of the valley, which is close under the monastery, whenever these fits took him."

The vesper-bell at that instant tolling, we all hastened to the chœur, whilst my heart beat with anxiety to see this poor victim of demoniacal delusions, who was to appear at the service. Neither will it surprise my reader if I say that I expected to see in

this Clarice some symptoms of the horrid influences under which I supposed her to be ; wondering, at the same time, what she could have done, in what blasphemous thought she could have indulged, or what blasphemous action she could have performed, to have rendered herself subject to so dreadful a judgment : indeed, I was so much affected, that Pauline, who walked by my side, and guessed what was passing in my mind, said, “Fear not, Angelique, you will not see in Clarice any thing to alarm you.”

The service was about to commence with an anthem, begun by the officiating priest without the grate, and taken up by the sweet voices of the sisters within, when Pauline whispered—“Clarice,” and looking to the door which led from the ante-chœur, I saw, for the first time, that beautiful creature, the idea of whom had filled my mind ever since I had heard her name. She was dressed as we were, only that she had no cross upon her breast. In her hand she held a wax taper, but it was not lighted. My reader will understand the emblem. She stepped no further than the door-sill, and there stood so fixed and motionless, as to show like a beautiful statue, placed within a magnificent frame of the fine gothic order. Her eyes were fixed upon the pavement at her feet, and I saw not that her eyelids moved. A stream of violet light, passing through an upper compartment of the deep-stained storied windows, rested on her figure and on the side of her face, giving a splendour to her form and features which no pencil could imitate. And truly, I thought that I had never seen or imagined a human form or set

of features so exquisitely lovely as those of this fair and meek religieuse ; and yet I could hardly have described the sort of fascination which riveted my eyes on this sweet Clarice, insomuch so, that having once looked on her I could not turn away, or think of any thing but her. Was it the expression of deep humility and gentleness, meekness and peace, and that in one of whom I had just heard spoken as the victim of demoniacal influences ? But I had not yet seen her eyes, though I had observed the long dark fringes which rested on her marble cheeks. Oh ! that I could see those eyes, I thought ; but the service went on, in all its musical monotony, and was nearly finished, when a pigeon, pursued by some bird of prey, flapped against the highest pane of one of the windows of the chœur, making its escape from its enemy into the sanctuary, through a casement which was open, a little below where it first had struck.

The noise attracted every eye, but I turned again to Clarice, and saw that she, too, was looking up : her eyes were fixed on the frightened bird, which had settled for a minute on the ledge of a mullion of the window ; and it seemed as if this little incident had roused her from the stupor of continual grief, for a brilliant colour mantled in her cheeks, and her eyes, of dark and rich blue, expressed an interest which, a moment before, I should have thought it impossible so small a matter could have excited : but the service was concluded, and the meek and suffering sister was thereby admonished that she must stand aside, lest her touch should contaminate

the solemn procession of her former companions, now arranging themselves to pass out from the chœur.

Having found it necessary to be very particular in many parts of my story which have gone before, and as it will be equally necessary to be particular in some future scenes, I would willingly hasten over some of the minor events which are now to come. From the period of my profession, several weeks passed over with but few incidents. I think it could not be more than three, because in that time I did not see Madame Verani once, and we were permitted to see our friends once a month: but, otherwise there are no epochs by which I could mark this time, in which no change whatever took place. Oh! who that has not felt it, can conceive the horrible monotony of the mode of life I had so precipitately adopted, in which there was gloom without privacy, dulness without ease, idleness without rest, labour without profit, religion without peace, society without amusement, intimacy without confidence, and pain without reward—not even the reward of a good conscience; for the desire of accumulating good works, and keeping a stock of merits, which, after all, is the leading principle of monastic life, may be compared to the insatiable appetite for gold, which becomes the more voracious by indulgence, insomuch so, that the wretched miser only feels himself the more needy in proportion as his treasure accumulates, and the more uneasy from feeling how liable he is to be deprived of this treasure, not only by the various accidents of life, but by those also of death. In the same manner the poor penitent, in the Apos-

tate church, labours through each weary hour to augment his merits; feeling, at the same time, how entirely these may be rendered null, even in the last hour of his life, by some failure in the required forms, and found not adequate in that hour of trial which follows death. Not so the true believer, whose dependence is on the merits of the Redeemer, and whose treasure, even the righteousness of Christ, is laid up for him where moth and rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. But at the time of which I speak, I did not, by any means, understand the impossibility under which a corrupt creature lies of establishing such a merit for himself as may render him acceptable in the eyes of a holy God; nay, I not only believed that this might be done, but that it had been done in thousands of instances, though I did not feel how I could do it; and strange to say, I found myself further from what was right, after having been some weeks in the convent, than I had done within the world.

The discourse of the Superieure on the power of demons had struck me much, added to which all the strange stories supplied by the sisters, and the mysterious situation of Clarice, together with sundry inquiries suggested by my own mind concerning the nature of the temptations which might, in solitude, be brought to act upon the heart, inquiries which were not unfrequently helped forward by the sort of reading to which I was condemned, worked most strangely, and in a manner to me wholly unprecedented, within my breast, insomuch so, that I could not have concealed from Father Joachim,

even had I wished it, the nature of the tumult within me. Then followed many searching inquiries from the confessor, with many severe injunctions respecting confession, and threats of future terrible punishment, should I fail in laying open my whole heart to my spiritual guide; the good father adding, "that the very dread of having such thoughts to confess would prevent me from indulging in them." But the father was greatly mistaken; he did not know human nature; neither did they know it, whatever their intentions might have been, (and I hope they were not all bad), who enforced the duty of repeating dull forms of prayer eight times in the twenty-four hours to young things in the hey-day of life, by which forms the mind was left to exercise itself as it would. Oh! how did the enemy flow in like a flood, during those times, into my heart; how did gaiety and pleasure, and ambition, present themselves to my mind, and fill my whole soul even at the very time that I knelt at the chœur, seeming to those without the very image of sanctity; and then again what horrors would occasionally seize my mind, during the intervals of these reveries, so that with one strange feeling and another, I was as a vessel tossed on a stormy sea, and removed farther and farther from the haven of peace. My health too, so far gave way that I was a prey to a constant feverish lassitude; and I observed that many of the younger sisters were affected in that same way. Others, again, were more decidedly injured by the mode of life we were obliged to lead: and, no doubt, had not cir-

cumstances prevented it, which I hope to explain hereafter, I should have seen more than I did, descending to an early grave. There were some, however, among the sisters who, having stood the seasoning, were become so inured to the mode of life as not to appear to be sensible of its fatigues; but these were comparatively very few; and I have often been astonished to think what some of these few could go through in the way of long self-imposed fasts, protracted kneelings, exposure to cold, hard couches, and interminable severities. One of the most determined of these seeming self-tormentors, and real tormentors of others, was la Mere Ursule—a creature all bone and sinew, horn, and gristle, of an iron constitution, naturally deficient in feeling;—yet, as Pauline used to observe, she was the very stuff of which an eminent Santa should be made. But, as I was saying, three weeks, more or less, having passed without any changes since my profession, which three weeks had served to give me a very clear idea of the tenor of life to which I had thus hastily condemned myself, one night it happened that, during the nocturnal prayer, the sister Clarice, who had been present at every service, standing in the place I have described, suddenly dropped her taper; and whilst we looked at her it was evident she was in the act of fainting. Pauline and I had often talked her case over in retirement, and, notwithstanding that we did not question what the Superieure had said, respecting her being under the influence of some evil spirit, yet we could not help saying, that we feared she was too harshly

treated, secretly wishing that we could find an opportunity, unobserved, of showing at least that we sincerely pitied her, and sympathized in her sufferings: but she was never present with us but in the chœur, and where she spent the rest of her time we know not. There was a part of the house, the passages to which were by doors at the end of the gallery, below and above, into which we had not yet been admitted. This part of the building contained the private apartments of the Superieure, and some large chambers which were occupied by the sick on occasion of any severe illness. Here also was a tower, commanding the town, which had been resigned, for years past, to the owls and bats, which always take possession of any deserted building. We believed that the sister Clarice slept in some of these chambers, and that she was then under the especial surveillance of Madame. However, during the night I speak of, this poor young creature who, no doubt, had suffered greatly, was so far exhausted that she dropped her taper, and was falling, when Pauline, who was ever most prompt in every act of kindness, flew across the chœur, followed by me, and arrived just in time to break the fall of the fainting sister. With my help she lifted her up and carried her to a bench in the ante-chœur, where, without thinking of who might hear, or of what consequences might follow, she poured out to her, as she revived, many of those sweet feelings of compassion which had so long dwelt in her heart.

It would have been entirely dark, had it not been

for the solitary lamp suspended from the vaulted ceiling of the ante-room ; and the voices of the sisters in the chœur, singing the midnight chaunt, was the only sound which stole on the ear, with the exception of the sweet accents of pity, poured forth by Pauline.

“What is the matter, dear sister ?” she said, “why are you separated from us ? Why can you not be with us as before ? Resist the evil one, and he will flee from you ; the church is all-powerful ; use the means which are provided for the victory over the enemy ; there are many amongst us who love you dearly—Here is my own Angelique, though a stranger to you, she has wept with me and prayed for you, with the real kindness of a sister—say you love us, gentle Clarice—say you love us—and return and be with us as before.”

“Oh ! beloved Pauline,” replied Clarice, “sweet sisters, and do you not wholly reject, and abandon me ?” and, seated as she was, she threw her arms around Pauline and wept abundantly.

“Then you will, dear sister, you will be what you once were,” said Pauline. “They charge you with refusing to obey the ordinances of the holy church—of showing contempt of our sacred mysteries. Will you acknowledge your offences, if you have been justly charged, and pray to be restored ?”

“Oh, my God !” replied Clarice, lifting up her united hands, “have mercy on me, have mercy on me, and give me strength—strength to say—it cannot be—it must not be !”

“What cannot, must not be ?” asked Pauline :

but before Clarice could reply, we were aware of the presence of sister Annunciata.

The beautiful nun stood directly where the lamp shed its strongest ray upon her face. A calm severity expressed itself in her fine features, and raising her hand, "Go, Clarice!" she said, "leave these holy sisters: be not, as a second Satan, beguiling the children of Paradise. Withdraw to your chamber: affect not a weakness you do not feel. He that has strengthened your will against the Almighty, will assuredly assist you in this present hour of need;" and her upper lip curled, as it were with scorn, as her eye followed the trembling Clarice, who was passing slowly along the vaulted passage which led from the ante-chœur, at the command of one who had once been to her as the dearest of dear friends. But Pauline could not bear to witness this cold and cruel scorn, and no sooner had the figure of Clarice disappeared in the gloom, than she broke forth in high and beautiful indignation:—

"Does it become you, Annunciata," she said, "you who were once to her as a friend most dear, to point the arrow which is to pierce her, who is already wounded to death? Grant that she has fallen, who was once the light, the glory, the beautiful ornament of the community—who shall say but you may next become an object of scorn for others? Who has armed you with a strength that cannot fail? May not your very pride, your sense of your present sanctity, be the very quarter in which the enemy may attack you? But we have seen, we have understood in what scale your influence has

been laid, and I will be plain with you ; we think that the severe measures which you have abetted, if not counselled, have riveted the chains which have bound this unhappy Clarice."

It was impossible to stop Pauline by any hint that I could give her, till she had run herself out : and it was too suitable to the policy of sister Annunciata to suppose it possible that she should attempt to stop any one who, through anger, enthusiasm, or any other excitement, was in danger of betraying any secret feeling, either of her own or of another. However, when my friend had said all that is recorded above, and a great deal more, she answered, calmly, " This is an affair for the consideration of Madame, and to her it must be referred : for the present, our superior duties call us to the conclusion of the service. Madame has sent me to request the immediate return of sister Pauline and sister Angelique to the chœur." So saying, she walked majestically before us, whilst we followed, all trembling with contending emotions, of which those of fear, and almost of hatred, were the predominant.

It was not to be expected that the indiscretion of Pauline would be disregarded. It is, however, one of the characteristics of a monastic establishment, that the displeasure of the Superieure does not always break out immediately, but like a volcano, may burst forth at any time, though oftentimes without any previous mutterings. Madame looked as serene, and sister Annunciata as impenetrable, the next morning, as if nothing uncommon had taken

place. We observed, however, that poor Clarice did not appear, neither did I ever see her again in the chœur.

I had to attend the confessional that morning, and, as I expected, father Joachim pressed me closely respecting Clarice. It was right, I knew, to confess my own opinions relative to her case, but I was careful of what I said of those of others. I however let it appear that there was a sort of idea in the house, that Clarice had perhaps been too much tempted, and that it was thought that some of the symptoms which appeared so strange in her, might perhaps have originated in terror. I also hinted that although, as a novice, I could not possibly return to the world, yet that there were other convents in the country ; and that I knew one of the order of St Francois de Sales, which had been highly spoken of. I threw out this hint on purpose, although I had already formed an attachment so strong for Pauline, that I had secretly resolved that I would not leave the house in which I then was, excepting in company with her. My reader, perhaps, may not understand, that a novice may change her convent—not so a religieuse, who has taken the black veil.

The father took no notice of this hint, but told me in confidence, that there was something in the case of Clarice, which would render it advisable for me to avoid her society, and not to speak of her amongst my friends. “We are willing,” he added, “to restore her by kindness, if possible. And if the most earnest prayers of sinful mortals can prevail, mine,

and those of the excellent lady, Madame la Supérieure, for this unhappy young woman, will, in the end, restore her to the bosom of her spiritual mother. But at present, my daughter, let the matter rest, and give us credit for desiring to use the utmost kindness which the eternal interests of the soul of the wanderer will permit."

I would have replied, but he dismissed me: and from that time, for several weeks, things went on much as usual. Clarice did not attend our public services indeed, or join us at our meals, but she was at large in the house, and I sometimes passed her in the gallery, though I never addressed her. Indeed, I could not have done so, had I wished it, for we were too carefully watched.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECLUDED SISTER.

ABOUT this time I had a visit from Madame Verani. The Superieure accompanied me to the grate ; we therefore could have no private conversation—indeed, all our discourse was upon the state of public affairs. I do not intend to mention the exact year in which I took the white veil, but it may be understood, when I say that it was coincident with the period in which the revolutionists of France, having excited furious and bloody tumults throughout their own country, first burst their bounds, and began to excite the same confusion in the Sardinian dominions, as they had done at home. Madame Verani brought an account of their actually being in the capital, and of certain ravages which they had committed there ; “but, I trust,” she added, “that they will not find their way to St Siffren : it is so much out of the beaten track, so withdrawn within the hills, that I hope we have nothing to fear.”

The destruction made in the religious houses of France were then spoken of, and the abbess expressed great alarm, lest circumstances of this kind should take place in this country.

The sister Eustasie was to take the black veil in a few days ; and Madame Verani asked the abbess,

if she would take care that she had seats to see the ceremony. I thought my friend spoke with a peculiar meaning, when she asked the favour. I had learned to read looks with some accuracy, since I had been an inhabitant of a convent, but of course made no remark. She took occasion, shortly afterwards, to ask me if I had formed any particular friendship in the society; and whether the young ladies were in general of foreign or Sardinian families.

"We have," I replied, "several French, one Italian, and one English sister."

"And who may this last be?" asked the abbess.

I was about to say, "The sister Clarice;" but, recollecting that the name always excited displeasure, I hesitatingly answered, "One, Madame, whose father was an Englishman."

"Yes," she replied, "an English heretic."

These words were uttered in a low and bitter tone, but they were not lost on Madame Verani; however she took no notice, and soon afterwards took her leave.

I have said before, that the ceremony of a profession afforded something like a holiday and a bustle in the house. The assumption of the black veil, however, differs so little in form from that of the "ceremonial des vestures," as the putting off of the secular garments is called, that I shall not enlarge upon it. This last ceremony is, however, still more solemn than the former, inasmuch as it is more irrevocable. But I was a spectator in this last scene, and therefore had leisure to observe more of what was passing, than when I was the principal actress.

I was so situated within the grating, that I could now and then get a glimpse of Madame Verani, whom I loved better than ever I had done before. She was sitting next to the railing of the altar, on the right side of the church, and, from being thus situated, having the most perfect view of the opening from the high altar into the chœur, which was on the left side of the altar. M. Verani was seated at her left hand, and, on her right, was a young gentleman, who, for want of room, stood during the whole time of the ceremony, leaning against a pediment of one of the arches which sustained the roof of the church. It did not happen, however, that my attention was at all attracted to this gentleman.

I had never before witnessed the ceremonial of the black veil, and was in consequence deeply affected by it ; but there were others in the chœur who had seen it often ; and as forms, however solemn and well-arranged, always lose their effect by repetition, so these were not affected as I was—they were sufficiently at ease to look about them through their bars.

Nuns have eyes, as well as other people ; and they will now and then talk nonsense, as well as persons of their own age in the profane world. Accordingly, when we came out of the chœur, and were at our treat in the refectory, the higher powers being engaged at breakfast with Monseigneur l'Eveque and the rest of the company, something was said of the handsome stranger, who stood by Madame Verani during the service ; and I was asked if I were acquainted with him ?

“What was he like?” I answered, for, as I before said, I had not observed his figure or face.

Immediately a number of particulars, forming together an unusually handsome man, were enumerated; as, for instance, bright auburn hair, a blooming complexion, perfectly regular features, &c. But I was not able to help forward any conjectures respecting this young gentleman, and we were pursuing this discourse, which might have carried us further than we intended, when one of the most staid of our party having remarked, that conversation of this sort was not what should be amongst veiled and cloistered nuns, no further observation on the young stranger was made, than that he had frequently looked earnestly through the gratings, and had been visibly affected when the black veil had been put over the head of the sister Eustasie.

It is a credit to our society to be able to add, that I am not aware that I ever heard any light discourse amongst the sisters. There were, no doubt, in our society characters of various descriptions, but the fault of the establishment was not that of levity; such as is attributed to the religious houses in many continental countries. If any vice of this kind existed amongst us—which, from some circumstances that have come to my knowledge since I left the house, I have great reason to suspect—they were covered with a thick, and to me at that time impenetrable, veil of hypocrisy; and as my beloved Pauline was, I sincerely believe, even in her darkest state, a subject of grace, by being constantly associated with her, I was preserved from one of the worst

effects of the unnatural system of shutting up numerous idle-minded persons in one house, viz. that species of communication which is not convenient.

When the repast was concluded, we all went out to enjoy ourselves in the garden; Pauline and myself being, as usual, side by side, and availing ourselves of the opportunity of conversing more freely than we were often able to do. Our conversation, as might be expected, soon turned upon the unhappy Clarice, and we occupied ourselves for some time with conjectures respecting the reasons of the severe treatment to which she was subjected, being, as it were, an outcast from all society.

“What can her crime have been?” said Pauline; “what mysterious offence can she possibly have given? Do you believe what they tell us respecting her being under diabolical influence? Think you not that they have some end of their own to answer, by treating her as they do? Truly, sister Angelique, I wish that I could get rid of the strange thoughts which haunt me continually.”

“I have relations in Switzerland,” she continued, “who are of what they call the Reformed Church. I have never seen any of them but my cousin Wilhelm: he would have induced me to read the Holy Scriptures and judge for myself; but I was offended at this proposal, and insisted, on my part, that he should abandon his religion as a proof of the regard he professed for me. This he would not do, and I was angry with him; and in my anger allowed myself to be persuaded to throw myself into the net in which I am now involved. Oh! that the thoughts

which now torment me, had come before it were too late ; and she wept more bitterly than I had ever seen her weep before. But, presently recovering herself, she said, "Sister Angelique, do you recollect the answer in the Catechism of the Bishop of Montpellier, respecting prayer, viz. 'We ought to pray to God only as the source of all good, and of all graces ; and to Jesus Christ, as our only mediator. We may pray to the holy Virgin and the saints, as our intercessors near to Jesus Christ.' "

"I recollect this passage," I replied ; "but what then ?"

"I hardly know what to say more," added Pauline ; "but do not be angry with me ; how are these saints to hear our prayers ? Can created beings be present every where ? and can there be holiness inherent in images made by man's hand ? For instance, did I not but yesterday break, by accident, a petit Jesus de cire, smashing it all to pieces ; was I then guilty of any horrid sacrilege ? Do help me to disembarass my ideas, for they are all confusion. I have heard of good men objecting to the honouring of images, do you think poor Clarice has any strange notions of this kind ?"

"Pauline, you terrify me," I answered ; in the name of the Mother of Mercy, say no more. Have I not heard you say that a religieuse has no business to reason or think ? We have placed our consciences, our eternal concerns, in the hands of our spiritual rulers, and we must not now retrace our steps."

"True," replied Pauline, "too true ; but this

poor Clarice. I have been trying to discover where she sleeps and eats, and I think I have succeeded. It was last night I thought I heard a step in the passage just before midnight, and fearing I was too late for the service, I dressed in haste, and stepped into the gallery. I saw the door at the end open, and a sister passing along the chamber within, bearing a light. I was curious, and I followed her quietly. I saw her turn into the gallery which leads to the apartments of Madame, and I saw her open a door on the left and go in. She had something in her hand, which she carried into that room. I heard her also speak to one within, and I heard some one answer; I am sure that it was poor Clarice who spoke. Oh ! Angelique, what would I give for half an hour's conversation with that unhappy creature. I am convinced that there is some mystery in her case, with which we are not permitted to be acquainted."

"It may be so," I answered ; "but did you get back to your cell unseen ?"

"I did," she replied ; "it was la Mere Ursule whom I had followed, and she did not discover me."

It was a few days after this conversation that my friend, Madame Verani, presented herself at the grate, desiring to see the Superieure. When Madame appeared, she made out a very plausible excuse for her appearance, stating that she was anxious to show her some letters, which she had received from the capital, touching the troubles which had already taken place there ; at the same time begging her so far to depart from the rules of the

house as to permit her to see me only for a few minutes. "My friend," she added, "had, at one time, a strong inclination to enter into a particular convent at Turin, and I wish to tell her something which I have heard very much to the disadvantage of that house, by which I hope to settle her mind more to her present blessed situation. But I must do this with address," she added, "and, therefore, if you could let me see her, and permit me to converse with her in your presence, I could introduce the subject as if accidentally, and thus effect my purpose, which is to induce her to settle her mind to her present happy abode." All this was afterwards told me by my friend, who, at the same time, described the alacrity with which the abbess swallowed the bait, and sent for me. But I was scarcely arrived behind the grate, when Madame Verani found another letter for the Superieure, giving an account of an attack made by the French upon the convent of Saint Claire, at Nice; the holy building having been already converted into stables for the republican armies, and the sisters dispersed; an account which the Superieure read with such intense interest, that it had power entirely to withdraw her attention from me. Nay, she was so disturbed, that she retreated to the door to call la Mere Ursule, to hear the recital of these horrors; and staid there so long as to give my friend sufficient time to put a small packet into my hand, and full opportunity for me to conceal the same in my wide open sleeve, which was all duly performed before the abbess returned to my side, accompanied by her assistant. But whether it was

my own consciousness or not, I thought that, notwithstanding her agitation, she gave me a searching look ; yet I believe this was fancy, for the next minute she afforded me a very good opportunity of relieving myself of the packet, by sending me to look for the sister Annunciata. I had to run across a long passage, where I met my faithful Pauline. I committed my packet to her, and ran back, after calling Annunciata, as rapidly as I could, in order not to excite suspicion ; and truly I thought that the hour which we afterwards spent at the grille, talking over the public news with Madame Verani, was the longest I ever experienced in my life. Nevertheless, I had many other tedious hours to spend in suspense, for it was not till after breakfast the next day, that I dared to examine what the little parcel contained. Then, being shut up with Pauline in my cell, and having our work littered about us, to catch the eye of the kind Mere Genefride, who waged eternal war with any thing like slovenliness, should she come in, we opened the envelope. It contained several folded sheets closely written. The first sheet was a letter from Madame Verani, imploring me to be secret and cautious, and not to betray her, or the friend who had used this means to get a letter conveyed to the hand of a beloved sister, of whom he had, for several days past, taken every possible means of obtaining a sight.

“He is,” said Pauline, “the fine youth who was in the church, when sister Eustasie took the veil.”

Madame Verani’s letter contained little of importance ; we therefore hid it for the present, by a con-

trivance not necessary to explain, and proceeded to examine the other papers. The first of these sheets contained an earnest petition to the amiable and pious sister Angelique to assist a brother in conveying a remembrance to a beloved sister, whom he never expected to see again on earth. The arguments which he used were such as I could not have resisted, even had not Pauline supported his pleas with all the warmth of her natural character.

The remainder of this letter contained a short but affecting history of the writer himself. It stated, what Pauline had before told me of the family of Clarice; for my reader has already, no doubt, conjectured that it was the brother of that unhappy young lady, who had taken these means to cause a communication to reach his sister. It informed me of the name of the family, which was Beaumont—it spoke of the marriage of his father with a Sardinian lady—of their separation, on account of the difference of their religion—of her return to her own country, with her daughter—of the subsequent death of the father—of the mother's marriage, and total desertion of her former family, having had several children by her second husband.

The letter then proceeded to describe somewhat more at length the strong attachment which had subsisted in infancy between Emily and Edward; "for," said the writer, "we were twins—we were rocked in the same cradle, and lay at the same time on the same breast, and so great was the resemblance between us, as babes, that a stranger could hardly have distinguished us. It seemed, he con-

tinued, as if Providence had brought us into the world at the same time, to point out that it was not according to the divine pleasure that we should be separated by the diversity of the religious opinions of our parents.—Nor, indeed, did we experience the dreadful consequences of this diversity till we entered our seventh year : for, till that time, being kept in the nursery, under the care of a pious female servant, we were accustomed to kneel together to prayer, morning and evening—to listen to the same histories, chosen from scripture for our instruction, by our faithful nurse—to look to one Saviour, to hope for one heaven, and to dread one fate, in case of our rejection of that Saviour. We were happy then, and were as two birds singing on one branch ; and it was not the fault of our faithful attendant, if that branch were not the Holy One of Israel. But we were separated in our seventh year, and after my father's death, I lost sight of my mother and sister : yet I might add, in the words of a beautiful song of my own country,

‘ Though lost to sight, to memory dear.’

My own sweet Emily—my little gentle Emily, for she grew not, nor lost a single charm of infancy, in my imagination, was the object of all my boyish dreams, and of many of my waking thoughts. At length, being set free from tutors and governors,—an event which took place only a few months since,—notwithstanding the difficulties of the times, I came to Geneva ; where I fell into company with a Swiss gentleman, who had, he informed me, a relation in

the same convent in which I understood my sister to be. Being arrived at St Siffren, I delivered a letter, which my friend in Geneva had procured for me, to the excellent Madame Verani. She entered at once into all my feelings, and advised me not to tell my name, but to pass for a Swiss ; while she most kindly took upon herself to inquire for my sister. This she has done several times, but with such ill success, that we know not what to think ; and, as a last hope, we have applied to you, most honoured and respected lady, in the full confidence that if any principle which I cannot understand, should prevent you from conveying a letter, which I have ventured to enclose in this, to that sweet sister, the memory of whom can be effaced only by death, you will not so far resent my boldness as to betray my presumptuous confidence." This letter was signed "Edward Beaumont."

My letter contained one to poor Clarice, which I gathered up carefully with the other papers, and secreted in a place where I felt assured that they would not be easily discovered ; which being done, we were obliged to hasten to the service, in which we were required to adore the host, with minds as little prepared for such service, as those of any honest papists could possibly be supposed to be.

My friend Pauline, who became every day more and more dear to me, took the earliest opportunity after this service, to say to me, "Sister Angelique, Clarice must and shall have her brother's letter ; it will be a consolation under her sufferings. It is sweet to think that there is one, at least, in the wide

world that has not forgotten a poor religieuse ;” and she wiped away a tear.

Whither had her thoughts then wandered ? Perhaps to some ground forbidden by the tyrant superstition : but she recovered her firmness in a moment, and said, “ I have long had strange conjectures ; they have come unbidden guests, but they will not withdraw.”

“ What do you mean ?” I asked.

“ My thoughts respecting that poor persecuted one,” she answered, fixing her eyes upon me, “ are not what they would have them to be ; they are not the same as yours.”

“ How do you know what I think of her ?” I asked. “ You know that I would comfort her if it were in my power : but still I think—”

She took up my words, “ that she is much to be condemned, and ought to be treated with some severity.”

“ And did you not think with me once, Pauline ?” I replied.

“ I did :” she answered, “ but thoughts, like guests unbidden, have intruded themselves within my breast, and compel from me a better entertainment every day. Nay, more ; all that is without, all that I see and hear, administers to these unbidden guests.”

“ Truly,” I replied, “ you must speak more literally before I can comprehend you.”

“ But if I am not at present minded to be more explicit, sister Angelique, what then ?” she answered, somewhat of her natural archness breaking through a deep shade of sadness, which had sat on

her features for some time past : “ but Clarice shall have her letter, even if I am fed on soup maigre and lentiles for a month to come. Let it be placed where either of us may know where to run for it ; and if one or other of us do not find an opportunity to deceive them, we have not profited by our residence in this house half so much as some who are counted far greater saints than we are.”

“ But, sister,” I answered, “ who are those whom we are meditating to deceive, but our spiritual guides and rulers ? and how are these deceptions to redound to our eternal welfare ? Grant that these are only venial sins ; how many years, nay ages, of misery, may they cost us in the flames of purgatory ? For although,” I added, “ we are taught that our Lord will preserve us, his espoused, from the fires of hell, yet he will assuredly submit us to the purification of purgatory, to cleanse us from our venial sins, of which these acts of deception are undoubtedly none of the lightest.”

It may be well to remark, in this place, that the Papists entertain ideas respecting sin totally contrary to scripture, wherein it is asserted, that he who offends the divine law in one point, is guilty of all ; whereas the Roman Catholic Church classes all sins under two heads,* namely, mortal and venial ; the mortal sins being seven in number, namely, pride, avarice, luxury, anger, gluttony, envy, and idleness, —these being capable of changing their nature, and becoming venial, under certain modifications.

* Catechisme Theologique.

But I am forgetting myself, and losing the thread of my narrative. I had been pleading the horrors of purgatory to Pauline, to which pleadings she made answer, "Well, be it so," and she sighed deeply ; "yet there is one comfort remaining, and that is, that our superiors, who by their harshness have compelled us to these acts of hypocrisy, have a good chance of suffering with us ;—for they ought to know, if their hearts are not of stone—which I have sometimes thought—that whenever no respect is paid to natural feelings, hypocrisy will assuredly find a place to insinuate her temptations. But at all events, poor Clarice shall have her brother's letter. Were it an epistle of another description, I would have no hand in it ; but if any contrivance of mine may prevail, I say she shall have the letter."

It was not in me to oppose my warm hearted friend, neither was Pauline baffled in her attempts to convey the letter to the hand for which it was intended, though several days passed before she found the propitious moment. But one morning, after the midnight prayers, having observed that Madame had left the door to her suite of apartments open, she came to my cell—took the letter, and ran out again, saying that I should hear of her success or defeat during the day.

She was successful ; she crept, in the dark, to the door which she supposed to be that of Clarice, and having ascertained, though the undertaking was hazardous, that she was not mistaken, she slipped the letter under the door, and returned to her own cell.

I could not but heartily rejoice at the success of

her scheme, although during all that period, whilst carrying on any deception, as it regarded my superiors, and those to whom I had as it were vowed obedience, I was truly miserable. Every thing like peace, whether well or ill founded, was banished from my mind; I felt myself every instant on the eve of detection, and what I then considered as an important duty, namely, confession, was, as it were, a net in my path, involving me deeper and deeper in the sin of hypocrisy. But it was impossible to confess to Father Joachim what I had done for Clarice; although I was apprehensive that the shrewd confessor had many suspicions that I was keeping something in the back ground, which he would have been particularly glad to have been made acquainted with.

It happened, however, that being one day much troubled in mind, from the necessity in which I felt myself, of concealing the art which I had used in the affair of the letters from my confessor, I happened to take up the Theological Catechism of the Jesuits, and there, to my great delight, in the chapter on Confession, I found the following question and answer:—

“Q. Is the confession of sins necessary to salvation?”

“A. Yes, if the sins are mortal; for, as to those which are venial, there is no obligation to confess them.

“Deception,” I thus argued with myself, “is not a mortal sin, therefore it is not necessary for me to confess it. Yet if I do not confess it, I shall receive no absolution for it; then the guilt will continue to

lie at my door, and I shall be liable to the punishment." Thus I reasoned with myself, becoming more and more perplexed, and feeling, from day to day, less confidence in the confused and contradictory system on which I was required to rest an implicit faith. Many Papists have, I firmly believe, been carried through their lives without being subject to any doubts, respecting the power of their church to uphold them through all spiritual difficulties, and to ensure their eternal interests in a better world ; and I also trust that when the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, it will be found that even within the courts of this great temple of Baal, there is a large remnant of those who are saved according to the election of grace. Yet this I may assert, that I have never seen a member of the Roman Catholic church entirely at ease respecting his salvation ; the very best of them hold the opinion that they may be lost in the eleventh hour, even granting that they have lived in a state of grace until that period,—nay, in the last moments of that hour, through the neglect of some form. For the Romish church rejects the doctrine called the assurance of faith, or final perseverance, which, in fact, can never be held by a church which places any dependence on works or forms. Neither does any Roman Catholic, however firm his faith may be as it regards the final salvation of his soul, feel himself entirely relieved from the dread of the purifying fires of purgatory, which, after all, present no very agreeable prospect to a timid and doubting spirit.

But, although things went on much in their usual

dull routine in the house, after that Clarice had obtained her letter through the active zeal of Pauline, the interest which I had expressed for her, in my private conferences with Father Joachim, together with several expressions of uneasiness respecting the manner in which she was treated, and the confinement to which she was condemned, for we saw less and less of her, rendered it necessary, in the opinion of our superiors, that this spirit of dissatisfaction should be set at rest, especially as the times were unsettled, and the alarms from the French were becoming every day more loud and threatening; although we, in the interior of the household, were not permitted to know any thing of what was feared without. Accordingly, one afternoon, at the hour in which we usually met in the hall to give an account of what we had read during the day, we were surprised to find the confessor with the Superieure.

I have not yet described Father Joachim : he was a man of a certain age, rather short of stature, having a florid complexion, his hair inclined to be sandy, his eyes small, grey, and lustreless; he wore a black skull-cap, and his hands were particularly pale and cadaverous; but he knew his trade—or business—or what shall I say?—particularly well; and the Superieure could not have had one who would have worked more cleverly into her hands, in all the political arrangements of the household. We knew perfectly well when we saw the Father in conversation with Madame, that he was not there for nothing, and Pauline gave me a look which was full of meaning and of apprehension. We were directed to

take our places as usual, according to our standings, round the room, but not to sit down ; and when this was done, the Superieure spoke, and having slightly referred to what had passed at the midnight's service, when poor Clarice had fainted, she addressed the novices with much kindness and suavity of manner, saying, that as we were as yet young and inexperienced, she thought it very possible that we might not understand her dealings with her unfortunate daughter, the sister Clarice, and that even, from the mild appearance of the unhappy sister, we might actually doubt whether she really were under that dreadful state of delusion, which she too well knew that she actually was.

She then proceeded to say, that having consulted the reverend father then present, he had advised that the sister should be exorcised, and then brought to a test in the presence of the whole family ; which test, if she could endure, would prove her sane, and which, if she could not endure it, would at least prove to the family that the evil did exist, which was by some persons doubted.

The Father then spoke, and promised that the test should be so easy that no one could possibly disapprove it ; and that every one present should be subjected to it, in order to render the ceremony more easy to the unfortunate person in question.

All this appeared to be very open and candid, and even kind, and seemed to meet with general approbation. Accordingly, the Superieure ordered all the windows to be shut, lighted tapers to be set on the table, and a large crucifix, with a bowl of eau benite,

to be placed on the table. La Mere Ursule was then directed to bring the sister Clarice, who shortly appeared, wearing that mild but steadfast expression of countenance, which had always seemed to me to be so remarkable a characteristic of this suffering young creature.

There was a dead silence at that instant in the hall—the Superieure visibly trembled, and the Father was equally agitated, for his lip quivered, and his complexion became more intensely cadaverous.

Clarice had entered, and was advancing to the table, probably mistaking her orders, which were that she should immediately attend the Superieure; but being commanded to stand in the centre of the room, the Father suddenly showered upon her a quantity of water from the benetier, at the same instant sucking in his breath, and emitting it towards her with a sort of convulsive effort, followed by a loud and discordant charge to the demon supposed to dwell within her, to come out from her, in the names of the Holy Cross, the Mother of Mercy, and all the saints dwelling in paradise.

It was natural for Clarice to start, when thus suddenly assailed with the shower dashed in her face, the vehement gestures of the Father, and the tremendous voice which reverberated from the very walls of the apartment: and no doubt this was a result expected and desired, and good care was taken that this natural motion should not pass unobserved, for he failed not to point it out as an evidence of the strong influence of the demon who presided within the breast of the afflicted person. There was much

holding up of hands and elevating of eyes amongst the seniors on this occasion, with sundry grimaces and contortions; these were suddenly interrupted by a call to prayer, which was instantly obeyed, every person present, with the exception of Clarice, kneeling down in the place where she stood, and the eyes of all being fixed upon the Father, or turned towards our unhappy sister, who stood during the whole time with her arms crossed over her breast, and her eyes fixed upon the pavement. Neither did she start again, when fresh showers of water were thrown upon her from the benetier.

And now followed various loud and vehement prayers and invocations on the part of Father Joachim, with sundry forms and ceremonies, consisting of crossings, and salutations, and kneelings, and risings, and bowings, and sprinklings, which succeeded each other in rapid succession, until the principal performer in this piece of jugglery, for I can call it nothing else, was glad to pause for a moment, to gather breath, and to wipe the perspiration which oozed from his brow. During this pause, the Superieure admonished us by a sign to rise from our kneeling attitude, which being done, we all stood for a while, the confessor seeming to be busy, during the interval, with the cross which had been placed upon the table, sometimes taking it up and pressing his lips upon it, and again setting it down and mumbling a prayer before it. At length he turned to the Superieure, and said, "Daughter, you are my witness before the tribunal of the Almighty, how I have wrestled and contended in prayer, according to

that which is prescribed, in cases of this kind,* by the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, of which Jesus Christ is the invisible, and of which the Pope is the visible head; and without the pale of which no soul can be saved. And now, until this moment, I have been utterly foiled and baffled, through the prevalence of the evil one over the heart of this our miserable daughter; and yet, lest any one here present should still be misbelieving, I am willing to put the matter to a test which, to every candid mind, must be incontrovertible. The Holy Scriptures admonish us to try the spirits; and this is the trial which I propose:—Let every one here present approach this table, according to seniority, and dip her fingers into this holy vessel, and press her lips in meek adoration upon this sacred symbol. If the afflicted sister can endure this test, my daughter,” he added, still addressing the abbess, “we may trust that our prayers have prevailed, and that the Mother of Mercy is ready once more to receive her lost one to her divine bosom.”

The Superieure signified her assent to this proposal, by descending from her dais and being the first to submit to the test; then followed the seniors, and afterwards, one by one, all the sisters of every degree; and when we had all gone through the ceremony, we looked anxiously at Clarice, who still stood where she had done from the first.

“Daughter,” said the priest, “come forward; we invite you to return from the way of death into that

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

of life—from the dominion of Satan to a strict reunion with him who was your first love, your espoused husband and Redeemer—to the arms of your spiritual mother, to the society of your weeping sisters, and to all you once held dear. We invite you to turn from sorrow, and wo, and death, and hell, to joy, and peace, and the hopes of paradise.” And whilst he thus spoke, all our eyes were fixed, with an intenseness of solemn interest, which I cannot describe, on the still figure of the unhappy Clarice.

The priest, in the mean time, seemed to have exhausted his rhetoric (hypocrite as he was, I thought better of him then, and gave him credit for all the earnestness he expressed) and looked at the abbess as if to inquire what was next to be done, but she was silent; whilst something like a slight convulsion agitated the features of Annunciata.

“Must I pronounce the Anathema Maranatha of the Church?” at length thundered the priest.

“No, no, no,” exclaimed Pauline; “no, no, no, my father; yet wait a moment;” and she sprang forward, drawing me with her, and down we both fell upon our knees before him, saying, “Oh! spare her; spare her yet a little moment; spare, spare the unhappy one—only one little moment: let us pray again; who knows but that there may be mercy yet in store for her?”

Many were affected at this scene, and the unhappy offender so much so, that she visibly wept.

It was the part of the Superieure to act the compassionate on that occasion. I did not understand her then, and God forgive me if I think worse of her

now than she deserves,—but certain it is, that she promoted the cause pleaded by Pauline ; and in consequence Father Joachim again proceeded to utter his thundering oraisons, till the arched roof rung again with the overpowering noise ; then rising from his knees, all bathed in perspiration, he affected to have thought of a last expedient, and taking up the symbol again, he approached Clarice, and tendering it to her with sundry earnest pleadings, he so contrived the matter as to permit it to drop as if from her hand, and to fall at her feet, where, by its own force and weight upon the pavement, it broke in pieces.

I shall not easily forget the impression produced by the crash of the fractured cross, nor the horror expressed by the greater proportion of the sisters, many of whom were then as ready to cry *Anathema Maranatha*, as the Father had before been. Neither did he now spare her, but after having pronounced the dreadful words by which poor Clarice was declared to be an object of eternal damnation, he commanded that the sacrilegious person should be kept in close confinement until the pleasure of the high ecclesiastical authorities respecting her should be ascertained.

La Mere Ursule, as no doubt known to be the fittest for the purpose, was then directed to lead her away, and we, the rest of the household, were immediately summoned to vespers. This was the moment of the triumph of the evil one over that lily of the Lord's planting, and of the exultation of those of the family who had long secretly envied and hated her. Many eyes which had beheld her that evening,

saw her no more after that hour ; neither shall they see her again till the period shall arrive when “ the secrets of all hearts shall be opened,” and it shall be said, “ Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

The scene which I have described above, seemed to fill every mind, even after it had taken place, with nameless apprehensions ; all the terrors of superstition seemed as it were to be let loose upon us. Clarice had disappeared, from that evening, and had she still been permitted to have mingled with us, we no doubt should have fled from her as from a person infected with the pestilence. One heart only seemed to bleed for her, and one eye only attempted to penetrate the shade into which she had been withdrawn ; and I am ashamed to say, that that heart and that eye appertained not to me ; on the contrary, what I considered at that time the daring impiety of the unhappy nun, had so entirely filled my mind with horror, that I did not attempt to reason upon the subject, or to admit the possibility that the poor young creature might have been unfairly dealt by. But will my reader long remain in doubt that it was my own affectionate Pauline, my comparatively enlightened Pauline, who, of all the household, was the only one who pitied poor Clarice ; and it is with shame I confess, that when she ventured to hint that all might not have been as it appeared to be as it regarded the fall of the symbol, I rejected the suggestion with a feeling of horror, such as I should have had in holding communion with a person convicted of the grossest and most abominable impiety : but although I rejected

these suggestions at that time, yet I was far from betraying my friend. She was assured of my fidelity, and under this assurance, she continually poured her apprehensions into my ears; and in thus doing not only gradually succeeded in shaking my prejudices, but in confirming her own opinions, arriving at length at the perfect conviction that we were altogether under a deception respecting Clarice, and that that which was behind was totally different from that which was apparent; but this was gradual work even with my friend, and with me it was still slower.

In the meantime the first horror which had been excited by the scene just described, in which the *Anathema Maranatha* had been pronounced on our poor sister, was becoming less and less vivid, and something like the old dull uniformity of our lives was beginning to banish from remembrance the scenes which had lately past, when, one night, one of the sisters, returning from nocturns, and passing along the gallery, the door of her cell being near the eastern window which overlooked the burying ground, saw a white figure, as she thought, standing at the foot of the marble cross in the centre of the graves. She at first imagined that her eyes had deceived her; but she looked again, and then, as she solemnly declared, she saw the figure flit over the graves, but not as if using the means of motion of any earthly creature,—and thus pass away, its drapery floating behind it like a cloud or vapour; the unearthly whiteness of the whole figure showing conspicuously amid the shades, which were deep, on account of the height of the buildings with which the court was surrounded.

It was one of the dullest and most slow-minded of the sisters to whom this adventure occurred ; but she was neither dull nor slow in imparting her terrors to the rest of the family. Her shrieks presently called us all into the gallery, and there the Supérieure made her profit of the adventure, and declared her opinion,—blaming herself severely for not having proposed the measure before,—that it would be necessary and expedient to appoint a solemn day of fasting and penitence ; in order, as she said, to expiate the grievous offence which had been committed in the house, by the casting down and trampling under foot of the divine symbol ; “For till that is done,” she added, “how can we expect that our once holy house will be freed from the influence of malign spirits and demons of hell ; or that our Lady of Misericorde will smile again on her devoted children !”

Thus speaking, she took the arm of la Mere Assistante, and moved away, having previously commanded us to withdraw separately to our cells, in order, no doubt, that being alone, we might have the more leisure to meditate upon our agreeable situations, such as our own ignorance and superstition might depict them to us : for it was a part of our creed, that evil spirits had much power on earth ; and it was far from agreeable to us to suppose that because of the offence of Clarice, the malign beings were entirely at liberty to work their will with us in any way they pleased, until some means could be found of effectually propitiating those higher powers whom we had unwittingly offended.

CHAPTER V.

THE BISHOP'S VISIT.

WE were informed the next day that our bishop was on his way to St Siffren, being on a journey through his diocese; and it was then arranged that we should require his presence to exorcise the house, and to assist at a solemn ceremony, which was fixed for the day on which he was expected. There was a great fervour and bustle of preparation for this ceremony, and it was then that I first saw those parts of the building which lay below the level of the ground, and which, in old convents and churches, are frequently as extensive, and far more intricate than those above the earth. This fact may perhaps afford much matter of consideration. Why were these dark chambers prepared, unless they were intended for concealing transactions which would not bear the light?—and again, How were they constructed, so as to be secret to the workmen in general? To the last of these inquiries, I have somewhere read a satisfactory answer, namely, that the mysterious orders of freemasons had their origin from the necessity of providing these secret chambers in fortresses and religious houses (a necessity which arose from the state of society in the dark ages), and which secret refuges, no doubt, adminis-

tered largely, through the depravity of man, to the purposes of hidden barbarities. But be this as it may, there is no doubt that the chambers in the foundation of our house were very extensive. The principal descent into them (for there were several secret stairs into different parts of these vaults) was by a narrow pointed door, embossed with iron, and covered again with one in carved wood resembling the common doors of the house. This entrance to the secret chambers opened from the upper gallery. Within the door was a narrow staircase, which, after sundry turnings and windings, arrived at a circular chamber on a level with the ground floor; whence another staircase descended to the subterraneous apartments. At the foot of these last stairs was a large stone hall, or rather, I should say, chapel, furnished with benches, and having, at the further end, a beautiful screen of Carrara marble, of a perfect and brilliant white, so arranged as to permit that which was behind it to be distinctly seen by any one sitting before it. Within the screen was the private chapel and altar of Notre Dame de la Misericorde, with certain precious relics and votive offerings of immense cost. This little sanctuary was splendid in the extreme, being all of that brilliant yellow marble called le Brocadel d'Espagne. The roof of the chapel arose in the form of a dome, and was lined with glass mosaic, representing Him of whom no effigy should be made. When the chapel was lighted up, the brilliancy of this mosaic was almost inconceivable. The altar of the chapel was of lapis lazuli, with cornices of gold, having a splendid figure

of the Virgin above it, and at her feet an image of our patroness, in the habit of the order, kneeling and presenting a burning heart to the object which she was supposed to be in the act of worshipping. On the heart was engraved this motto, in Latin—*Given for thee*. We, the uninitiated, were, however, only permitted to see this splendid sanctuary through the screen. We were employed to make artificial flowers for adorning the altar; also in finishing a stool, which was to be an offering to the bishop. But I was describing the inner chambers, those dark and doleful regions which never saw the fair light of day: there was more than one door which opened into the outer chapel—high-pointed, narrow, ominous-looking doors—and there was a long passage, apparently parallel with the gallery above, which ran a long way, from one corner of the small vestibule into which the lower flight of stairs descended.

Having been employed to carry some flowers down to the sacristine the day before the bishop was expected, Pauline and I contrived to escape observation, in order to explore this long, under-ground passage. It was arched, and the walls were shining with damp and slime; there were many doors which opened into it, but all were fast, and apparently had not been opened for years, but we observed several narrow winding stairs which came down into the passage, and from one of these we gathered up a very small fragment of black serge, bearing the marks of having been torn from a larger piece, as if by a foot set on it. Pauline took it up; it was a portion of a nun's veil; she looked at me: it seemed

as it were a warning to us not to pry too closely into the mysteries of the place, and we hastened back, with beating hearts, into the usual haunts of the sisters. But, being in a place where we could not be overheard, Pauline said, "You have hitherto, Angelique, lent a deaf ear when I have suggested my fears that poor Clarice has been unfairly dealt by; will you hear me now, when I say, that I have my fears that they are dealing barbarously with her? Where is she now? where have they confined her? what has she done to incur their hatred? Oh! Angelique, Angelique, what would I give only for one moment's conversation with that unhappy creature. This, I doubt not, is a fragment of her veil; by what violence was it torn from her? In what dark chamber is she confined? to what extremities will they go with her? I have heard of offending nuns being bricked up alive in their tombs; and I know that Rome is not so far off but that an offender might be conveyed to the inquisition there, with little fear of detection."

"Peace," I said, shuddering; "speak not of such horrors; but if Clarice were a blasphemer?"

"If," returned Pauline, "if she be a something else? what then? will tortures reclaim her?"

"You speak enigmas—what do you mean?" I asked.

"Nothing;" she replied, "but, Angelique, at any rate she is an object of pity. In very deed and truth, I feel assured that Father Joachim had more part in throwing down the sacred symbol than poor Clarice."

“Mother of Mercy!” I exclaimed, “do you think so?”

She placed her hand on my lips, and then suddenly exclaimed, “I tell you that they ought to be pea-green; and if you assert the contrary, I shall say that you have walked with your eyes shut ever since you were born; and I refer the question to sister Annunciata”—thus giving me notice who was behind me. “Are not the leaves of the olive-tree delicate pea-green?” she added, “for Angelique will have it that they have a peculiar tinge of their own.”

This appeal to Annunciata caused me to turn quickly round. I, however, as quickly took up Pauline’s cue, and for once, I think, we succeeded in baffling Annunciata, and making her believe that we were thus vehemently discussing the colour of a leaf.

The next day was a fast indeed, and we were not permitted to taste a morsel till noon. At that hour we had a dinner of pulse, and we were to fast again till after the ceremony, which was to take place at the going down of the sun. At sunset, the subterranean chapel was lighted up, the bishop was introduced into it, with his principal suffragan and Father Joachim, and we were all paraded into the outer chapel, singing one of our most solemn chaunts. It would be but a fatiguing repetition to describe more of our ceremonies; there is a sameness and heartlessness in them which none can feel more entirely than those who think it their duty to take a part in them. The place, beneath the earth, was the only circumstance which rendered this form materially different from every other which had gone

before. But what Pauline had suggested of the apprehended sufferings of Clarice weighed heavily on my heart; and when the bishop addressed us, and told us that the dreadful offence of which the apostate sister had been guilty, in throwing down the cross, and, as it were, trampling it under her feet, would assuredly bring destruction on the whole house, and fiery torments for myriads of ages on every individual of the family who did not, by prayer and fasting, deliver herself from a participation in the horrible guilt,—so strong a feeling of doubt of his veracity, and so lively a suspicion of his sincerity arose within my breast, that I could even then, had I dared, have torn the veil from my head, and rushed back into the world, at the risk of incurring even a severer punishment in the life to come, than that with which he threatened me. In short, I had begun to doubt of the truth of my spiritual guides, and to see things in a new light, though, as yet, darkly and indistinctly.

When the ceremony was concluded, we were all led out of the subterranean chapel, and taken to a slight repast in the refectory, after which we were dismissed, as supposed, to our beds. But I had not yet undressed, when a low signal, given at my door, roused me again, and, on opening it, I saw Pauline.

She gave me another signal, and walked on before me, stepping softly to the farther end of the gallery. She stopped before the entrance of the subterranean chambers: the carved door had been fastened back, ever since the preparations for the ceremony had commenced, and the inner door, namely, that em-

bossed with iron, was ajar, though nearly closed.—Pauline informed me that she had seen the sister Annunciata go in but a moment before, and had heard her slip a bolt within, not ascertaining, in her haste, that it had not entered the catch, of which she, Pauline, had been immediately made aware by a sudden blast, which had caused the rusty hinges of the inner door to creak; and then, having pointed this out to me, she put the startling question, “Are you willing to follow Annunciata, and see what she is about? Now is our moment to find out what they are doing with poor Clarice; and if they detect us, let us say, that, finding the door open, we had resolved to spend the night in prayer before our Lady of Misericorde.”

I shall not trouble my reader with enumerating all the objections I made to this daring act. Suffice it to say, that the more courageous spirit of Pauline overruled them all, and that I accompanied her down the stairs, which, as I before said, were a double flight, the first only reaching to a level with the ground-floor of the house, and the second to the subterranean chambers. We had scarcely got to the foot of the second flight, when the lights, from the gorgeous sanctuary described above, burst upon our view.—Still there was darkness without the screen, sufficient to render our figures obscure. Hearing voices beyond this screen, we crept round the outer chapel, and fixed ourselves in an obscure niche, where we could see all within the sanctuary, and hear also every word which was spoken.

I have often wondered, upon reflection, how it was

possible for two young women, such as we were, to have dared so far as we then did; but we were urged by a vehement feeling of anxiety respecting the fate of Clarice, which we had little doubt would be revealed in this secret council. The parties within the screen were the bishop, who was seated on the left hand of the altar, and who remained in an attitude of deep thought; the Father Joachim, the bishop's immediate attendant and confidant, a member of the Society of Jesus, the Lady Abbess, la Mere Ursule, and Annunciata. The bishop spoke first: "The affair is weighty," he said, "and I ought to have been told this, when last in this place."

"We had hopes," replied Madame, "that she would have given way. We were unwilling to fly to extremities."

"When a limb is infected with gangrene, my daughter," replied the bishop, "no ideas of false compassion should prevent us from cutting it off.—You have indulged your own feelings at the expense of our holy Mother the Church—you have sinned grievously. But let the offender be called: I will speak to her myself." And he seemed to relapse again into thought.

At a motion of the Superieure, Anunciata and la Mere left the Chapel; we missed them, indeed, the next moment, but we saw not by which way they went out, nor did we hear a door shut or open at the moment of their disappearance. The follower of the bishop had begun to speak. I learnt his history sometime afterwards. He was a Jesuit from Livorno, and the confessor of the household of the bishop. He was

also said to hold an office in the inquisition at Rome, and was a man of an awful aspect, though his features were remarkably fine, his brow calm and lofty, and his voice deep and remarkably clear and melodious. I shall call him the Inquisitor, his name not having been known to me at that time. It seems that the bishop had referred to him for his opinion, probably by some silent motion, for I did not hear him speak. The answer was: "I should have advised a removal to Rome, where the matter could be speedily settled, were there not some fear of a rescue, if she should find means of holding converse with any person whatever in the towns through which we must pass;—the popular feeling is now so much against all compulsory methods. The thing, therefore, must, if possible, be settled here." And he added something about the French, which we did not quite understand, and then resumed, in a louder tone, "It will be safer to deal with her here, if possible. The question might be applied safely in this place. These walls are thick!" and he looked round him with a searching glance, which made Pauline and myself shrink more closely into the shade of our corner.

"I have reproved my daughter, indeed, for being too lenient," remarked the bishop, "but much as I abhor the crime of this our apostate child, I would not, as yet, choose to go to extremities. Let us try milder means first. Solitary confinement and a diet of the most meagre description has overcome more obstinate cases than this has yet appeared to be; and you know an instance, daughter," he added, ad-

dressing the abbess, "in which an individual has been gathered back again into the bosom of the church, after thirty years' resistance, and if such an one is recovered only to die in the true faith—though never again to be restored to the light of day—it ought to be a subject of rejoicing. There are few minds which can stand years of solitary confinement."

Oh, my God! I inwardly exclaimed, what horrors are these which unfold themselves: who can say but that some miserable wretch is now confined in these dungeons, of whom we have no suspicion. He speaks of thirty years—thirty years of solitary confinement!—But the Jesuit was speaking again;—

"It is not for me to dictate to my lord," he said, "but the defenders of the church should not suffer souls to be lost because their more tender feelings bid them to shrink from blood. The times, I allow, are perilous, and infidelity is stalking abroad upon the earth. What we do, must be done with discretion; and all means are lawful which promote the honour and safety of our holy Mother Church. Pardon my zeal, if it sometimes flames too hotly; but God be praised, there is a hell, where all who despise the church on earth will be taught to know that her authority is not to be defied but at the peril of damnation."

Whilst uttering this last dreadful and astounding word, one of the upright and gilded panels of the wall opened, and the lovely Clarice, all pale as marble itself, and habited as a sister, though without her cross or rosary, stood in the door way. "Ad-

vance," said the bishop; and the next minute she moved into the centre of the chapel, Annunciata and la Mere Ursule placing themselves behind her. For an instant not one word was spoken. The silence was awful, and the eye of each of her angry judges fell under the calm and steadfast expression of their victim. At length the bishop spoke, at first mildly, but gathering heat as they proceeded, "Is this true which they allege against you, daughter," he said; "namely, that you, having taken the sacred and solemn vows which ought to bind you eternally to a heavenly spouse, having further bound yourself to chastity, poverty, and an holy life, have wickedly and impiously renounced your obedience to the church, and professed those tenets which are justly held in abhorrence by every individual who is not prepared as fuel for the fires of hell?" The bishop here ceased to speak, as if afraid of being betrayed into some excess of passion; and Father Joachim, in his turn, addressed our unhappy sister, saying, "It is requested of you, daughter, here, in this sacred place and sacred presence, to give a full and true account of the damnable errors which you, through the suggestion of the devil, have for some months past nourished in your bosom, in obstinate defiance of all your spiritual rulers and governors, and to the certain subjection of your own soul and body to the flames of hell through all eternity."

To these exordiums Clarice made no reply, though she somewhat changed her attitude, looking down upon the pavement, and folding her arms; on which the father again urged her to answer, descending to

the most vehement and offensive language, and proceeding so far in this strain, that the bishop thought it right to interfere.

“Leave me, my brother,” he said, “to deal with this unhappy young woman; you do but harden her, apparently, by your severity. You do not permit her to perceive that it is love, pure and ardent love of her immortal soul, which has led us to assemble here, to confer together respecting the best means of reclaiming her, and bringing her back to the bosom of her spiritual mother—that mother of whom she was, at one time, the chosen and the beloved—that mother who invited her to become the spouse of her Son, to the rejection of all inferior objects of affection, and who now extends her arms and invites her to return, and to be to her as she was at the first, one of the purest, and one of the holiest, of her daughters.”

Such was the substance of the address of the venerable prelate to Clarice; and it was delivered with such a pathos of earnestness as might be expected from one of the finest orators of which the church could boast at that period, and from a learned and polished gentleman, for the bishop was a son of the noble family of Colonna, and had received the first education which the Roman Catholic church affords;—and, undoubtedly, his eloquence seemed deeply to affect Clarice, for she wept and sobbed, and half kneeling before the venerable prelate, and clasping her hands, with beautiful earnestness she said, “Oh! my father! my honoured and respected father! would to God that it were in my power to do all that you require of me; but you demand of me that which I

dare not grant. You have been informed that I am a heretic, and I confess to you that I am constrained (by a power greater than my own, and one I cannot resist), to reject all objects of faith which are not revealed in Holy Scripture."

I felt Pauline, as she stood by me, start and tremble as Clarice uttered these words; nor can I describe the sensation of sudden and overpowering light which, at the same moment, shot across my mind.

Father Joachim and the Jesuit were about to speak, but the bishop motioned to them to be silent, whilst he put this question, "You speak of the Holy Scriptures, daughter; by what means have you obtained a sight of them?"

"The infernal spirit must have helped her," exclaimed Father Joachim, "if she has got them in this house."

"Allow her to speak for herself, my reverend brother," replied the bishop, repeating the question to Clarice.

"I read them as a child," she replied; "my nurse was a Protestant."

"Rather say, an accursed heretic," muttered the father.

"And she taught you to read the Holy Scriptures," remarked the bishop.

Clarice replied, that she had so done; on which the Jesuit, in a softened tone and tempered manner, insinuated the following query: "Granting your statement to be correct, my daughter, do you mean us to infer that what you learnt of your nurse in infancy, has been the means of affecting that change

in your principles, which, as you have acknowledged to my brother Joachim, took place only within the last few months? Has no other circumstance contributed to this change?"

"Let the truth be spoken," said the bishop; "it cannot now alter your case. Be assured that the utmost mercy will be shown to you which your unhappy circumstances will allow. I ask you, what was the immediate cause of the change in your sentiments?"

"The reading of the divine word, my father," replied Clarice, with firmness; "God forbid that I should attempt to conceal the blessed means which have rendered my life, even in this dungeon, more bright and blessed than all that the world could have given while destitute of that peace of mind which has been bestowed on me through the reading of scripture." The bishop would have interrupted her, but she went on as if not heeding him. "Before I was blessed with a sight of that holy word, I was in bondage to the fear of death; I could not see my salvation secure in the Redeemer; I was fettered by innumerable forms, and overwhelmed with the terror of some failure in duties which were too heavy for me to bear: but now, having been enabled to see my completeness in my Redeemer, I can look forward to death as to the entrance into a state of blessedness, which can cease only when one greater than God shall arise to tear me from his arms."

"Blasphemy!" exclaimed the Father Joachim; whilst the Jesuit bit his lip, and the pale face of the venerable bishop was flushed to the brow. The pre-

late, however, commanded himself and said, "You have not yet satisfied me respecting the immediate cause of your change of mind; how did you obtain a copy of the Holy Scriptures in this house?" "Speak," cried the Father, grinding his teeth; "and tell us what devil helped you." He was again checked by the bishop, though with commendation of his zeal.

Clarice then spoke, alleging, that she had no wish to deceive or to hide the truth: and she confessed, that when employed by the Superieure to attend Madame Barthelemis in her sickness, she had obtained the sight of a small bible, which bible had been sent to that lady when in the convent, with an entreaty that she would read it before she made up her mind to take the vows.

The Superieure was visibly agitated as Clarice proceeded, and she had cause to be so, for the bishop reproved her for having entrusted one of her daughters with a person with whose character she was not acquainted. The abbess acknowledged her error, and endeavoured to throw some of the blame on la Mere Ursule, who had been, it seems, especially directed to watch this lady. The bishop, however, having charged them both to be more cautious in future, adding, that he would speak further to them on this subject in private,—recurred to his examination of Clarice, asking her, "Wherefore the reading of the Holy Scripture should have turned her mind from that only true form of worship which is built thereon?" "Or, as the schoolmen would say," added the Jesuit, "how has it happened that error should have arisen from the comparison and consideration

of two subjects established on the principles of eternal verity ; for whereas the scriptures are the word of truth, so also the Catholic church (also called Roman because Rome is the seat of its earthly representative, and apostolic because it derives its ministry from the apostles in a regular and unbroken succession), is an uncontaminated source of truth, being incapable of error, since it is regulated and animated by the spirit of truth. I ask, then, daughter, how has it been possible for you to derive the spirit of heresy from the comparison of truth with truth ?”

Clarice made no reply, and the bishop said, “ Are you not aware, daughter, that ours is the only true church on earth, being the only church which has the qualities especially appertaining to a true church.* And these qualities are, in the first instance, unity of faith, and a single head ; in the second, universality and perpetuity ; and in the third, holiness ; and it is also an established fact, that there is only the Catholic church, commonly called Roman, which possesses these qualities ; whence it follows that all other churches are but the synagogues of Satan.” And the venerable prelate looked earnestly at Clarice as demanding her confutation of these assertions ; he was, however, obliged to urge her again to speak before she would answer. She then spoke in a clear, calm tone, and with a sweetness of voice and emphasis, and readiness of speech, which could not fail of filling my mind with astonishment,—not understanding at that time the nature of that assistance

* Catechisme Theologique of the Jesuits.

which our blessed Saviour imparts on needful occasions to his own children, thus enabling such to bear the testimony, that He who is with them is greater than he who is against them. "I am already, I see," said Clarice, "in that perilous situation in which I can look only for help from the the powers which are above, without the intervention of human agency ;" and clasping her hands, she stood for an instant, with eyes raised up, whilst her lips seemed to move in silent prayer. Then, as it were, having received strength according to the promise,—“And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour, what ye ought to say,”—she expressed herself much to the following effect: “There is,” she said, “in the private chapel of Madame the Superieure (to whom I desire to pay all honour and consideration as to a respected elder), a figure of the Virgin Mary, trampling the serpent under her feet. This same figure has a crown of twelve stars on her head; and there is a motto on the pedestal to this effect,—*“Ipsa conteret caput tuum.”**

* “She shall bruise thy head.”—In the Cathedral church at Lyons is an image of the Virgin trampling on the head of a serpent, with this motto, *“Ipsa conteret caput tuum,”* translated into French, *“Elle te brisera la tete.”* Whether the word *semente* or *race* is used in the French translation of the passage of which this motto forms a part, the relative will be feminine, and may therefore relate either to the woman or her seed: but not so in the Latin; if *semen* be implied, the relative must be neuter.

St Paul, quoting Genesis xxvi. 4, says, “He saith not unto

The Father Joachim would have interrupted her in this place, and I heard the muttered words, "Accursed heresy;" but he was again restrained by the bishop, and was wholly unobserved by Clarice. "I was taught," she continued, "that this image represented the mother of our Lord in the first instance, and that it was also an emblem of the same person as representative of the universal church, the mother of the body of Christ, of which every believer is a member; and I was thus led so to confound the person of the Holy Virgin with the attributes of the universal church, that I saw in this image the symbol of the church trampling under foot the evil one, and crushing to atoms the head of the arch-enemy of mankind. My ideas, I confess, were confused on this subject; but such as they were, they tended to high notions of that form of worship to which I had bound myself, and to the confirmation of the persuasion that there is no salvation beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic Church."

Father Joachim advanced a step towards her, as she spoke these last words; but being hardly restrained by a look from the bishop, he drew back so far as to be close to us, where, as he stood, we could

seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Jesus Christ."

The Greek word used is *σπέρμα*, and is translated into French by the word *race*. This is the word also used in the text of Genesis iii.

And so we find in Hebrew *zerang* is the word in Genesis iii. 26, and has the true meaning of seed, being derived from *zerang*, he sowed. So that St Paul, in quoting Genesis xxvi., does in fact quote Genesis iii. It being one of the promises.

distinctly hear the labouring of his breath, as of a person under vehement agitation of mind, and the grinding or gnashing of his teeth. As to the Jesuit, and the rest of the persons within the sanctuary, they stood mute and fixed as statues, with the exception of the prelate, who was, with much blandness of manner, and, as has since appeared to me, insidiously, drawing on the devoted sister to say all that was in her mind.

“Proceed, my daughter,” he said, “and let us know what this image of our lady has to do with the alteration of your principles.”

“I have said, my father,” continued Clarice, “that I had entertained the notion, together with all the sincere members of the Romish faith, that there is no salvation reserved for the sinner beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic Church; and, as I before remarked, I had confounded the real person of the Virgin with the symbolical idea of the church—confusing the maternal character of the mother of the man Christ Jesus with the emblematic character of the spiritual Mother of the body of Christians, of which the Lord is the head.”

“Proceed,” said the bishop. And the Jesuit changed his attitude, and bent forward his head in deep attention.

“It was on this subject,” continued Clarice, “that the first light shone upon my mind, from the reading of that bible which I found in the possession of Madame Barthelemis. There is a reference to the third of Genesis, at the end of the motto to which I have alluded, and when, in the course of my reading, I

came to this passage, I was struck—Pardon me ! my lord, I would not willingly offend—with the error in the quotation ; for I saw at once that it was not the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head, but the seed of the woman, even God manifested in the flesh. But, at the same time, I was convinced that a woman is the emblem selected by scripture to represent a church, her peculiar graces as a mother and wife being designed to exhibit a faithful and loyal church ; and her infidelities and wanderings from the way of honour, to show forth an idolatrous and impious polity. And having this clue, I followed the emblem through the whole of Scripture, and became persuaded—God the Spirit, I trust, being my guide—that those are in error who, in this period of time, apply the promises, which rightly appertain to the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, to any establishment on earth ; or attribute that perfectibility and purity to any human head or representative of the Redeemer, which is due only to Christ our Lord. For Christ," she continued, with beautiful earnestness, "is the husband of the church, the only head of the Christian body ; and the hour is not come in which the bride will be made manifest in her derived, and therefore complete, beauty, in the presence of her beloved. She possesses at present no glory which we can see on earth ; her children are scattered—there is no beauty in them which we should desire—they are as frightened sheep ; neither can they be gathered together, until He who is their head shall manifest himself unto them, when he shall appear again in his glory in the latter days.

“Thus I was brought to distinguish between that invisible church which is our spiritual mother, namely, the Jerusalem which is above, and those visible forms on earth which at best are imperfect, and to whom it is blasphemy to assign those attributes which belong to God alone. And having obtained these views through the leadings of the Lord the Spirit; and having, as it were, been brought to see the error into which we have all fallen, in placing the foundation below, for that church whose place is above,—it followed, of course, that all I had been taught to respect, as being built upon that false foundation, fell to the ground, and I became, what you now see me, incapable of admitting any other rule of life or doctrine than that which may be derived from the words of Scripture.”

Clarice here ceased to speak, and the bishop, looking at the Jesuit, said a few words in Latin, which I did not comprehend; on which the latter, speaking in a mild insinuating tone to Clarice, requested a further explanation of what she had just stated.

“Would to God,” replied the lovely nun, “that he would vouchsafe that same bright gleam of heavenly light to you, my reverend father, which he has, in his sovereign mercy, bestowed upon my once benighted understanding! That he would remove that delusion from your heart, by which you have been led to expect the fulfilment of those promises under the present dispensation, which belong only to the period of the triumphant reign of our Lord on earth and to the church which is above. For,” continued she, “we now dwell under a dispensation in which

the glorious state of the church is discovered only by faith, and enjoyed only through the assurance of hope ; and in which the visible church, being ruled and conducted by frail and sinful mortals, can never enjoy that perfection and purity which is promised to that which is invisible, and which will hereafter be exhibited in all that glorious beauty which she will derive from her union with her heavenly bridegroom."

Such, as nearly as I can recollect, was the answer made by Clarice to the Jesuit ; and although what she said was inexplicable to me at the time, it was understood by him, and also comprehended in some degree by Pauline, as appeared by several conversations which she afterwards held with me upon the subject. Clarice had however ceased to speak for some seconds before any one replied ; at length the Jesuit answered, and said, "my dear sister, I take in your reasonings, and I comprehend where their fallacy lies ; and, permit me to say, that through all my experience I have never yet encountered a more subtle stratagem of the arch-enemy than this which he has wrought in you. See you not that the error into which he has led you, not only tends to subvert the holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, but to destroy the pretensions of every church on earth."

"Of every visible church on earth," replied Clarice, "which assumes the prerogatives of that which is invisible, and which asserts an infallibility which belongs to God alone."

It seemed that these last words of the sister were more than the constrained moderation of those who

were present could support. There was a general burst of indignation poured upon her from every side. Accursed heretic and blasphemer—diabolical influences—fire and damnation, were amongst the mildest terms which fell from some of their lips; till at length the voice of the prelate prevailing, after the rest had, in some measure, spent their fury, was heard to the following effect, whilst he raised his eyes and hands in an attitude of prayer, having arisen from his seat, and turned to the image above the altar, “Oh! sovereign lady! star of the sea,” he exclaimed; “thou, to whom the three sacred persons of the Holy Trinity gave the name; thou, to whom all in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, do bow; thou, from the invocation of whose name more grace and mercy proceeds than from the name of thy adorable Son; the sovereign mediatrix with God; the holy mother of God; universal queen and immaculate; above all angels; alone inferior to God—have mercy on this thine household, and cleanse it from the sin of having harboured beneath its roof, a creature so utterly vile, fallen, apostate, accursed, as this miserable heretic now standing before me.”* Then falling on his knees, a motion in which he was imitated by all then present in the chapel, with the exception of Clarice, he began to pour out certain Latin prayers, with a vehemence which caused the hollow roofs and long vaulted passages to resound again; and was thus engaged when the slamming of some heavy door above reverberated through the long pas-

* St Anselm.

sages with a noise, no doubt, unusual in those silent haunts; the noise evidently startled the Superieure, and we saw her turn to Annunciata as if to ask her if she had fastened the door above. At the same instant Pauline pulled me by the sleeve; we felt that not a moment was to be lost. Annunciata, we thought, would not move to ascertain the cause of this noise till the prayer was concluded; and painful as our anxiety was to know what would be the sentence passed on the unhappy Clarice, we dared not to delay another moment, but crept from the corner in which we were ensconced, and happily reached the gallery above, a few minutes before the sisters came out of their cells for the nocturns: had we been a few minutes later, we certainly should have encountered some of them.

There was a huge iron bolt within the door which led from the gallery to the subterranean part of the house; and it is probable, as I hinted before, that when Annunciata went down to the private conference, she had slipped the bolt without ascertaining that the door had first been properly closed, and thus had missed the latch. These, indeed, appear to be small and unimportant matters, yet what great things sometimes hang on matters apparently light as air.

The necessity of suppressing the expression of feelings of the most painful and harrassing nature, is one of the torments to which all such poor individuals are exposed as are subjected to any sort of life directly adverse to the natural feelings given by God to his creatures. True religion puts no violent force on the affections. When properly understood, if it enjoins

some acts of self-denial, and condemns some exercises of the affections, as not agreeable to God, it offers objects as infinitely more worthy of those affections, as that which is eternal and incorruptible, is more precious and desirable than that which is perishable and tainted with sin.

Oh ! how heavily went the hours from the time in which we had witnessed the scene in the subterranean chapel, till Pauline and I could find a moment to converse with freedom. We had every reason to believe that our daring exploit had been unsuspected; but it was an effort greater than I could make to seem at ease. I had nothing for it but to complain of illness. A violent toothache, which I pretended, (God forgive my various hypocrisies), accounted well for the tears I could not restrain, and gave me a pretext for muffling myself up in my veil, and hiding my swollen eyes. At length, however, Pauline found an opportunity to come to me to my cell, by the favour of the kind mother Genefride ; and then it was that we not only wept freely together, but concocted a daring measure to serve poor Clarice, if possible ; for although we hardly understood our own feelings, and certainly did not acknowledge them to ourselves at that time, that which had passed in the conference in the subterranean chamber, had shaken our confidence as to the pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church ; but we had no bible to which to refer to resolve our doubts. The project we formed was this: we made a needle-book of card-board, and adorned it with a covering embroidered with beads, and we wrote on the card-board, within the covering, a note

to Madame Verani, saying, we had given the letter to Clarice; that she had, in some way, displeased the Superieure: and that she was not allowed to mix with the rest of the family, and was now, indeed, never seen by us;—leaving it to her to take what measures she thought best in this painful state of things.

I had seen Madame Verani once between the usual times appointed for the visits of friends, and I now expected to see her again in a few days. We therefore had to work hard to get our little case finished; and during those few days we had every reason to believe that Clarice was closely confined, and probably in some subterraneous dungeon.

The day at length came when the friends of the sisters were expected, and I was called down to Madame Verani. The abbess, as usual, was present, and sister Annunciata too, speaking to some friends of her own without the grate. Madame Verani was much agitated, and full, I saw, of curiosity, but I was aware that Annunciata watched me closely, though seeming to be otherwise engaged. Tyranny and art, however, beget cunning, and I was determined to carry my point, which was to convey the little case to Madame Verani. I was in hopes that some one present would ask to see our work, but this not happening as I had hoped, I hinted to Madame Verani that I had been very busy in certain small matters with my needle, and wished much for a pattern of a purse from her. My friend was remarkably quick at a hint, and instantly begged me to show her some of my handiworks, hinting that she wished to purchase

some trifles. I was then directed to fetch some specimens of our ingenuity, the other visitors expressing the same wish as my friend had done; and when I had brought them, I selected the needle-book, and putting my hand through the grate, pressed it into Madame Verani's hand with a squeeze, saying, at the same time, "examine the inside, where I have painted a heart laid open."

"What is that, sister Angelique?" said Annunziata.

"A needle-book," I replied; "la Mere Genefride has prized it at six francs."

"Let me see it," said she.

Madame Verani laid down her six francs, and immediately said with a smile: "No, no, I do not trust it out of my hands—it is a little jewel. Excuse me, fair sister, I must have it; it is my Cecile's work, and in her own sweet taste. And now," she said, "adieu, dear friends; may the blessings of the holy mother of God descend upon you!"

Oh, how did I tremble! and how violently did my heart beat, whilst I was carrying on this manœuvre! Should the history of my cloistered life fall into the hands of parents, may they be admonished thereby, to avoid that cold severity in which the young mind finds an excuse for artful conduct; and if it should fall into the hands of young people, let it be remembered by them, that a crooked policy, even under the most trying circumstances, always brings with it a thousand nameless terrors, which totally destroy all peace of mind.

Rejoiced as I was, that my communication should

thus successfully have reached Madame Verani, yet I cannot describe the terror which I experienced during the whole of that day, and until we had ascertained the result of our contrivance. It was not, however, till some time afterwards that I learnt the facts which, in order to avoid confusion, I shall relate in this place.

Madame Verani had no sooner got home, than she opened the needle-book—cut the lining, and found what we had written, or rather traced, with our painting-brushes.

The town of St Siffren was already in great commotion, not so much from the dread of the approach of the French armies, as from the demoniac spirit which the lower classes were exhibiting. And my friend, taking advantage of some slight uproar which had taken place in the streets, came to the convent a few days after she had received the case, and demanded an interview with the Superieure; which, being granted, she informed her that she had heard some threatenings against the convent, with a hint that if any unhappy sisters had fallen under the displeasure of the church, she might be forewarned to lose no time in restoring them to favour, and in so arranging her household, that should there be any inroad of the populace, no person should have a word to say against the mildness and tenderness of her government.

This was the tendency of Madame Verani's discourse, although her advice was not tendered in the plain downright style in which I have given it in this place, but insinuated in the gentlest manner, and with

all that respect with which the Superieure of a convent always expected to be addressed in the days of which I am speaking. I was not informed, of course, of this visit of my friend, but Pauline and I very soon discovered its effects, and felicitated ourselves upon it, in a degree proportionate to the risk we had ran to bring these effects about.

One morning, during the hour set aside for work and domestic duties, as Pauline and I were passing along the gallery to our cells, we met the sister Clotilde, the very same who had seen and reported the strange appearance in the burying ground; and she had her eyes and mouth open, as if she had actually come from beholding another prodigy as astonishing as that of a human being flying over a cemetiere.

“Oh, sister Angelique! sister Pauline!” she said, “Madame sent me to her room just now, I declare to Saint Ursula I have forgotten what for, and there, in the little chamber over the porch, which faces the cemetiere, who do you think is lodged but sister Clarice. I saw la Mere Ursule go in to her, to take her her breakfast, and it was all the same as we have; and I heard her speak, and thank the mother, and I came behind the mother, and saw her with my own very eyes; and there she is; and so what they say is all false.”

“What do they say?” asked Pauline, at the same time giving my hand a squeeze, which at any other time would have made me shriek.

“What do they say!” repeated Clotilde,—“why, that she was chained up in a dungeon because of the evil spirit; being so furious that nobody could come

near her. It was la Mere Aymee who told us that it was always done so with the possessed ; and she says more—she says, that she once her very self saw a sister so bad that they were forced to chain her to a stone pillar in a cell under the house. She was called Agnace,” she said, “and it was as terrible to look at her as if she had been the foul fiend himself.”

“How long ago was this ?” asked Pauline, shuddering and looking at me.

“La Mere Aymee can’t say,” replied Clotilde, “and la Mere Ursule, who could say, if she would, will not tell. She says it is all a dream of la Mere Aymee’s, and she rated her well for talking of such things. She says the old sister is grown childish, and does not know what she talks about. But, Jesu Maria ! now suppose the devil should take sister Clarice again, and she should break loose : the Holy Mother preserve us ! what would become of us all !”

She was interrupted in this place by la Mere Ursule, who, coming out of the Superieure’s apartments, inquired what was the matter.

“If sister Clarice should break out again, now you have brought her up into that cell, mother, what would become of us all ?” asked Clotilde.

“Brought her up again ?” repeated the mother, “What do you mean ?”

“Out of the dungeon,” said Clotilde.

“The dungeon, you fool !” replied the mother ; “why she has been where she now is, ever since you saw her last—under the tender care of our excellent Superieure.”

Could Pauline’s eyes have transfixed a heart, I

would not have given much for the life of the hypocritical mother at that instant. However, the old nun was not easy under the eye-beam which was shot against her ; and, addressing my friend, she said,—“What do you mean to infer by that glance, daughter ?—But I advise you to beware, and not to meddle with matters in which you have no concern. In my younger days, a glance like that would have cost me at least a week’s penance.”

“Thank God !” said Pauline ; and then stopped short.

“For what ?” asked the mother.

“For all his goodness,” returned my friend.

“Amen !” repeated the mother, giving her, at the same time, a searching look. “But take care,” she added, “there are more ears and eyes in this house than you may be aware of.”

“Agnace !” muttered Pauline ; but I dragged her away, and I think that the mother did not hear this last word.

Our minds were, however, greatly relieved respecting Clarice, by this communication of Clotilde. She had light, and air, and food, and we ourselves had little more. And not being perfectly assured that she did not merit some degree of displeasure, though we could not have endured the idea of her being treated with actual cruelty, we endeavoured to set our minds at rest respecting her, and to accommodate ourselves as well as we might to our situation, of which the monotony again appeared the greater and the more irksome, after the excitement occasioned by the late events.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PESTILENCE.

BUT it was not ordained that things should long remain as they were with us. A storm was approaching, and the commencement of the troubles of our house was very remarkable.

La Mere Ursule had a great niece, the only living descendant of an unfortunate sister. This little girl, called Ella Rosa, had lost her mother, who died at St Siffren at her birth ; and the father being a reprobate person, and not forthcoming at the time, la Mere Ursule, with the approbation of the Superieure, had adopted the baby, and placed her under the charge of a peasant, whose cottage was somewhere near at hand among the hills. It was determined that this little one should be taken into the house, as soon as she could be taught to behave herself with that discretion necessary in such an establishment, and young as she was, she was considered as a pretendante for the veil, and was hence brought, from time to time, and presented to the image of the Virgin in the chapel, and sprinkled with holy water. I saw her once, on one of these occasions : she was a sweet pretty little laughing thing, then not two years old, and the peasant, who doated on her, had not yet weaned her. Poor little baby ! how my heart ached for her,

when I thought of the long weary life for which she was destined.

But it was about the first of August, and the weather was particularly hot, when news was brought us that little Ella Rosa had died after a short illness, and that we must prepare to attend her obsequies, as she was to be buried in the cemetiere of the convent, as a pretendante to the sisterhood.

“Poor little babe !” whispered Pauline. “I could almost say, thank God ! that she has been delivered from the miseries preparing for her. Sweet infant ! she is now among the blessed.”

Ella Rosa had, it seems, died in the night ; and early in the morning the little corpse was brought to the convent, and placed on a bier in the centre of the chœur. Immediately after the matin service, Pauline and I stole into the chœur, to look at the innocent remains. The little form was extended on the open bier, which was covered with a white cloth. It was dressed in what is called the habit of a pretendante, which nearly resembled that which we wore ; on the brow was a crown of odoriferous herbs ; at the head of the corpse were six candles of wax, in silver candelabra ; and at the feet of the babe a cross upon an escabeau, covered with a white napkin, a burning taper being on each side the cross.

Over the face of the infant was a white sheet of paper curiously cut. We lifted it up, and were startled to see how entirely changed were those sweet features, on the beauty of which the sisters used to descant so rapturously, comparing them to some bright figure of a cherub—such as holy men

and women have pretended to see, when favoured with some celestial vision. The eyes of the corpse were sunk, and a circle of black had settled round the mouth, whilst, notwithstanding the incense which had been purposely thrown about the church by the care of the sacristan, a heavy smell already proceeded from the body.

“This is scarcely natural,” I said to Pauline ; “this poor babe died only a few hours since, and the work of dissolution seems to be proceeding at a frightful rate.”

“The weather is hot,” replied Pauline ; “and after all, dear sister, what signifies it how soon this work is finished ; dust must return to dust ; the soul, the immortal soul, is all we ought to care for.”

We then knelt by the bier, and prayed earnestly, though in much ignorance, for the eternal welfare and deliverance from the fires of purgatory of the little pretendante, singing or chaunting the following form of words, with many repetitions, thinking that we should be heard the more for our much speaking :—“*Lucesumus domine, pro tua pietate misere animæ filiæ tuæ, Ellæ Rosæ, et a contagiis mortalitatis exutum, in æternæ salvationis partim restitue per dominum nostrum,*” &c. The interment of the infant pretendante took place according to the usual forms, at twelve o’clock. At the hour appointed, all the religieuses assembled in the avant-chœur, and proceeded in order to the place where the body was, namely, the chœur, the order of procession being as follows : the sister who carried the benetier, or vase of holy water, going first ; then

she who carried the cross coming next, and the remainder following with lighted tapers, the Superieure bringing up the rear. Being arrived in presence of the body, the sister who carried the benetier placed herself at the foot of the bier, the one who carried the cross at the head, and the rest of the sisters on each side. All being thus arranged, the priest entered with his acolytes, bringing the censers and the benetier for the purpose of throwing the holy water on the bier. He then said or sung the anthem, "*Sit nomen domini*," which the singers took up; and after various ceremonies and prayers, and several anthems, the little body was raised on the bier and carried to the cemetiere, the priest, at the same time, singing these words, "*Juvenes et virgines, laudate dominum—laudate eum in excelsis.*" When the body had been committed to the dust, with various hymns and prayers, all in Latin, the priest cast holy water upon it, and incensed the body and the tomb; after which, the corpse was covered with earth, and we all returned to the chapel to conclude the service.

And here it was supposed, that, as we had done all which was required by the church for the little pretendante, every thing would have returned to its usual course, and been as it was before; but this was not to be; the obsequies of Ella Rosa were not so soon to be forgotten. La Mere Ursule would insist upon watching all night by the grave, and old Mere Aymee said that it was a meritorious act, and showed the sincere interest of the aunt in the everlasting welfare of the poor babe; and I well remember

seeing the poor enthusiast, as I now consider her to be, extended on the ground by the grave, on the cold damp earth, as I passed to the officium nocturnum : but this was not enough ; the next day she must needs fast until sunset, and one of the sisters, who visited her in her cell during the day, edified us all by informing us that she had found her kneeling before her coffin, which it seems she had provided herself some years before. There was a crucifix fixed upon the top of it, for it stood on its beam-ends at the foot of her pallet, and various garnitures of bones and skulls ; and, as I said above, she was kneeling before this gloomy object, repeating some hundreds of Ave Marias and Pater Nosters. Thus she spent her day ; how she occupied her night I know not, but certain it is, that when she appeared at matins on the following morning, she looked almost as like a corpse as her poor niece had done. Young religieuses have as much pleasure in looking well in their way as other young persons, but there is an epoch in the life of a devotee in which a sunk and emaciated, and above all a cadaverous and unearthly appearance, is thought particularly commendable. The appearance made by la Mere Ursule in the chœur, therefore, drew upon her much commendation, and acted as a stimulant to further painful privations ; and when she did not appear at the noon-tide meal, or at supper, it was attributed to some surpassingly wonderful act of self-denial. But what was the end of all this ? On the third morning after the death of her poor niece, she was found, not

actually dead indeed, but dying in her bed, and almost too far gone for the last sacraments.

The extraordinary change which passed on her body immediately after death, together with the dreadful effluvia which it emitted, was the first circumstance which struck us as extraordinary ; and then it was suggested, for the first time, among the assembled household, that several of the sisters had observed the same symptoms, though in a milder form, attending the corpse of the infant pretendante. Inquiries were then made respecting the cause of Ella Rosa's death, and it was found that she had been suddenly taken ill after having been carried to a house where a traveller had died of a fever ; and more than this, it was discovered that several poor people were, at that time, actually lying ill with the same symptoms in the neighbourhood, besides one who had died during the night.

No one, who is not shut up as we were, can conceive the effect produced by this horrible discovery. There lay the tainted body, exhaling miasma from every pore ; and who was to touch it ? who was to move it ? how were the forms necessary for the soul's benefit to be performed ? The Superieure had done well had she concealed the evil from us till the body had been buried, for there is nothing which promotes infection like excessive fear ; but terror had excluded all idea of caution ; and there we were, all collected in the passage, before the door of the cell where the body lay, wringing our hands, exclaiming, weeping, praying, kneeling, conjecturing ; and instead of attributing the evil to a simple and natural cause,

endeavouring to make out some supernatural explanation of the affliction which had fallen upon us. "Is it," said Pauline, "that we have been too severe on poor Clarice ! Let us entreat Madame to let her be set at large ; we will promise not to associate with her."

This motion was approved of, and whilst we were considering how it should be opened to the Supérieure, who had withdrawn to consult Father Joachim, sister Annunciata appeared at the head of the stairs, looking somewhat pale, but quite as calm as I had ever seen her. Pauline rushed towards her, and, in the name of the rest, begged to be permitted to speak to Madame respecting the sufferings of the sister Clarice, "to which," said she, "we attribute this token of the Divine displeasure."

Annunciata was evidently discomposed on hearing this proposal, but recovered herself instantly, and asked Pauline what had induced her to suppose that Clarice had been severely treated ?

"From the mystery and concealment which is always used in her affairs," replied my friend, fixing her eyes with an intent and searching gaze on Annunciata.

The latter endured the glance with unflinching steadfastness, and replied, "This is no business of mine, sister Pauline ; if you have any thing to say on this subject, Madame will, no doubt, accord you an audience."

"With what offence do you charge Clarice ?" asked Pauline.

“ I charge her with none,” returned Annunciata ;
“ by her own actions she must stand or fall.”

“ Be it so,” said Pauline ; “ and allow her to come out and either condemn or justify herself.”

“ Am I the ruler of this house ? do I regulate the measures taken with the unhappy one ?” asked Annunciata ; her lip trembling with suppressed emotion.

“ That is a question you may one day have to answer before the throne of the Searcher of all hearts,” replied my friend, who was totally regardless of all hints which I, and others around her, could give her to be silent ; “ but at least you know what is the nature of the offence of our sister ; and you know well that it is not what it is said to be.”

I shall never forget the expression of Annunciata’s countenance at the moment Pauline uttered the last sentence. A livid flash, I know not how to describe it, passed over her marble features, and her eye scintillated with indignation. She seemed to gasp for breath ; and though her lips parted several times, as if she was about to speak, yet she remained silent during some seconds. At length, after an effort similar to that used by a person who is endeavouring to swallow some bulky substance, she uttered the following words, with a calmness which perfectly astonished me, and gave me no small idea of the self-controul which she could use :—“ Permit me, sister Pauline, to recommend you to unburthen your mind on the subject in question to those whom it may concern, and not to one who, though much loved by Madame, is still considered as being too young to be admitted into her confidence. But

sisters," she added, looking round the circle, "I am interrupted in the deliverance of a message to you, with which I have been charged by our reverend father. Your presence is requested in the chœur, to assist at an act of humiliation; it is feared that some grievous offence, in which we are all implicated, has brought down upon our unhappy household this especial and terrible exhibition of the divine displeasure."

So saying, she turned hastily round and passed away; whilst some of the sisters muttered to others, "Can it be the contempt thrown upon the divine symbol to which the father alludes? we thought that that offence had been wiped away." Pauline gave me an expressive look, but there was no time for further speech: we hastened into the chœur, and had a solemn service, with various prayers and anthems not commonly resorted to, amongst which was one appointed to be used in the time of a fast, addressed to the virgin. "*Affecti pro peccatis nostris, quotidie cum lacrymis expectamus finem nostrum dolor cordis nostri ascendat ad te ad te, Domine. Domine ne memineris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum.*"

After this service the father dismissed us, recommending fasting and private prayer till evening, than which nothing, obviously, could more tend to give the disease all possible advantage to work upon our empty stomachs and exhausted frames. Of such absurdities are human beings guilty, when they would be wiser than that which is written. I must however remark that Father Joáchim did not men-

tion the subject of the fall of the image, as we had expected.

The funeral of the poor Mere Ursule took place in the afternoon. It was hastened over with as small reference to forms as possible. After which the house was incensed, and sprinkled with holy water, and several measures taken for purification: and it is possible that if we had had a good dinner that day, with air and tonic medicine, we might have escaped the contagion; at least we might have had a better prospect of so doing: but after a weary and harrassing day, and a supper of lentiles and soup maigre, we had an additional nocturnal service, and more than the usual number of lugubrious chaunts.

My reader may have already anticipated that the night did not pass away without another alarm. Such symptoms appeared, immediately after the service, in one of the sisters of the black veil, and also in one of the menials, that the abbess ordered the infirmary to be prepared with all haste, and sent immediately for the physician who attended the house.

The infirmary was a vast apartment, connected with the house by a long gallery, which extended itself over the cloisters on the western side of the cemetiere; and being so distant from the rest of the house, it was hoped the contagion would not extend from those already sick, when placed there, to those who were yet in health, remaining in their usual places; and such of the sisters as were employed to attend the sick were enjoined not to communicate with the other part of the family.

The disease was now ascertained to be the black

or spotted fever ; a most awful pestilence, highly infectious, and very sudden in its effects. It was attended with a dreadfully ghastly appearance in the patient, and with an almost insufferable exhalation from the bodies of the dead and dying. Nor can it be conceived how dreadful was the sense of being shut up with a pestilence like this, and without the possibility of flying to a purer air ;—at the same time wanting that which alone can bring consolation under such circumstances, namely, the assurance of salvation in Christ the Lord. But this assurance, as I have before remarked, never can be enjoyed by persons who believe that their future happiness depends in any degree upon their own works or deservings. Hence no Roman Catholic can ever enjoy it, whilst he is a Roman Catholic ; for although some may have arrived at some sort of confidence in the power of Christ to save them from everlasting misery, yet I know not that any serious Roman Catholic was ever entirely delivered from the dread of the purifying fires of purgatory.

This doctrine purgatory, according to the theological catechism of the Jesuits, is as follows :—Purgatory is a subterraneous place, full of fire, and near to hell, where souls suffer the pains which they have merited during this life by their offences. Those only enter purgatory who have gone out of the world in the grace of God, but who have not entirely satisfied the divine justice, by the penances which they were obliged to make for their sins. They remain in purgatory a longer or shorter time, according to what they have to pay for the satisfaction of the

divine justice. No souls are exempted from the fires of purgatory but those of little children,—those who die the moment they are baptized,—those of martyrs,—and those saints who have suffered and done great things for the love of God.*

Purgatory, then, with all its horrors, was before me at that time; for I felt that my state did not answer to that of any of the four descriptions of persons mentioned above; and if some light of truth had glanced upon my mind when I had heard Clarice reasoning with the bishop in the subterranean chapel, the superstitious fears arising from the gloomy scenes in which I was at that present time involved, had entirely overclouded this transient ray, and plunged me into a state of darkness and horror which rendered me more miserable than I had ever before been.

For six hours, however, after the sickening of the two sisters who had been carried to the infirmary—a period almost entirely filled up with gloomy forms—we were kept as it were in a state of suspense, till at length our dread repose was broken by two circumstances which took place in the same hour, which was that of midnight, namely, the tolling of the bell for the passing of the soul of one of the sisters in the infirmary, and the sickening of another in her cell. Well do I remember that night. I was dressing for the officium nocturnum, and there was gloomy and hollow moaning of the wind through the passages and chambers, at the moment the passing-bell reached my ear. I instantly opened the

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

door of my cell, and calling to one of the family who was passing along the gallery, asked what the bell imported?

“’Tis that sister Adeline is passing away;—the Holy Mother have mercy upon her!” replied the person to whom I spoke; “and we are preparing to take sister Marguerite into the infirmary.”

“What Marguerite!” I exclaimed; “the fair and blooming Marguerite—is she too going? God help us all!” But the sister had passed on; and whilst I stood fixed in the door-way of my cell, I saw the menials bearing away the fair nun to that place from which she was to return no more to mingle with her former companions. We had already lost three of our number, without counting Ella Rosa, for the sister who had sickened at the same time with poor Adeline, died before the noon of the next day; and as funerals were now so frequent, and attendance on the corpses so dangerous, the Superieure caused the services to be abridged as much as possible, forbidding any person, from curiosity or affection, to raise the cloth which covered the faces of the defunct. Both the sisters were buried that day, and before night another sickened, and was carried to the infirmary.

At this time the alarm became so general, and the physician so decided, that he insisted that we should not be fatigued and harrassed by such incessant exercises and forms as had hitherto been required, alleging that priests might be procured to say masses for us in the chapel, whilst we enjoyed that repose which was actually necessary for our safety. This

was complied with, and the number of our services materially abridged.

There were now several of the sisters in the infirmary. These were chiefly the younger ones; whilst the elders being engaged in attending on the sick, there was so much relaxation of discipline amongst those who remained well, that I was enabled to enjoy much more of the society of Pauline than I had done at any time before things were in this state. It was about a week since the death of la Mere Ursule, and the sickness still seemed to be extending its ravages (though as yet only three of our number in the house were actually dead), when one evening, at the hour of supper, it was rumoured that Clarice had taken the fever. We were in the refectory, and Annunciata came in to the Superieure to inform her, that having been with the unhappy sister, to take her her supper, as it was her custom to do, she had found her suffering all the earlier symptoms of the horrid disease.

“Mother of mercy!” exclaimed the Superieure, with much concern in her manner; “how can this be, shut up as she is within my apartments?”

“’Tis the hand of an offended God,” remarked la Mere Aymee, who was near the Superieure; “the Lord have mercy on her soul.”

Every one made the sign of the cross on her breast, whilst Annunciata stood as if waiting the directions of her Superieure, which, after a few moments, silence, she solicited by saying, “is it the pleasure of Madame that the patient should be removed to the infirmary?”

“No, my daughter,” replied the abbess; “no! I have promised it to our holy father the bishop, that this unhappy one shall never mingle with her holy sisters. Under this solemn promise I obtained for her those comforts of light and air, and nourishing sustenance, which she has enjoyed in the cell within my apartments. I have bound myself with a solemn vow—a vow whereon my eternal happiness depends—that no one should enter her cell but myself and our much lamented sister Ursule. If she live, I will supply all her wants; if she die, I will lay out her cold and pestilential remains. I will run all risks, for I am bound so to do. Those who are not afraid, may give me all I require through the grate; but I have said it, and I will abide by it: and may this act of obedience be a merit recorded in my favour, to balance the sin I committed in permitting this unhappy one to mingle so long with the rest of the family.”

“Oh! my mother! my mother!” exclaimed Annunciata, acting her hypocritical part with admirable skill, advancing to the Superieure, and half kneeling before her, whilst she bowed her head upon her hand, her veil at the same time falling over and shrouding her face, “permit your child, your favoured child, to entreat you not to incur this frightful hazard; it is impossible but that the deadly pestilence should seize you, if shut up with it in so narrow a cell. You cannot but inhale the corrupt breath, and suck in the dreadful poison.” And turning suddenly to us, her face all working with vehement agitation (the reason of which I now well understand), “mo-

thers, sisters," she said, "I beseech you, interfere and prevent our blessed parent from performing this act of heroic and meritorious piety."

Being thus called upon, we all spoke, offering our own services, and entreating the Superieure to seek absolution from the vow which she had made, and permit Clarice to be removed to the infirmary.

"It cannot be," she replied; "you know not the reasons for my conduct."

"But, madame," said Pauline, "why should you fear? What harm can the dying Clarice do to us? Our principles are all too well confirmed. Her opinions, even were she in health, and able to support them, could not surely, at this awful crisis, shake our faith in that religion in which alone safety is to be found."

Pauline was proceeding, and the Superieure would not have interrupted her, for, as I have said elsewhere, it is not the policy of a convent to give any check to such incautious betrayals of the thoughts, as sometimes proceed from persons under the influence of sudden or high excitement. Neither did I know what next might fall from her lips, when being almost overcome by terror (for I dreaded a discovery of our midnight visit to the chambers below more than I can describe), I suddenly seized her hand, thus arresting her attention, saying at the same time, "Sister, have you forgotten? know you not that Clarice is under the influence of the evil one? And how can you imagine that it is safe to converse, or hold any intercourse with her?"

Pauline reddened, and was silent; but Annunciata

said, "Our dear sister seems to have indulged some erroneous notions respecting Clarice;" and she looked to the Superieure, as if to remind her that it would be well to inquire into these notions. But the Superieure did not appear to be willing to pursue this hint. She had arisen from the supper table, and taking a solemn leave of us, withdrew with the air of a martyr about to ascend to the place of execution. Alas! the hypocrite. May God have changed her heart!

At this time, the imminent danger of our own persons, together with the constant alarms arising from the sickening of one and another about us, so perplexed our minds, that Pauline and I could not reason coolly on this strange resolution of Madame, as regarding Clarice. On the whole we thought well of her conduct to this poor creature. Neither were we so uneasy respecting the future happiness of the unfortunate young woman as might have been expected, considering the dark state of our own minds at that time;—knowing that she was what we then called a heretic, and believing, as we thought we did, that there was no salvation beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic church. But, as I before said, our minds were, at that time, in a very perplexed and confused state; a state, as it were, of amazement and terror. In the meantime, that is, from the period in which we had first heard of the illness of Clarice, until we were apprized of its termination, two more sisters sickened, and one died; and we were continually informed that the fever made its regular progress with Clarice; that one frightful symptom after another

took place, and that there remained but little hope of life.

We had, from the very first, been earnest with Annunciata to permit us to go to the grate of the cell within the Superieure's apartment, in order that we might take one last look of the fair Clarice, and this she had always declined ; but on the second evening, meeting her in the gallery, and observing more softness in her manner than was common—for she had so far yielded to human infirmity as to have been weeping—we made our petition, and she replied that if we would steal softly into the Superieure's apartment at midnight, she would make our excuses if we were detected ; at the same time warning us that we ran a great risk in coming within the air of the tainted chamber.

Having however obtained this permission, we watched till midnight, and then stole softly into that suite of apartments particularly appropriated to the Superieure. There were several chambers, one of which was furnished as a chapel, having an image of the Virgin treading on the serpent, with the motto mentioned before ; namely, "*ipsa conteret caput tuum.*" Within this chapel was another chamber, and a grate which opened into the cell where Clarice lay. In this chamber was a brazier, from which proceeded a faint and sickly odour of some drug which was burning there, in order, as we supposed, to counteract the influence of the infected air. Approaching carefully and silently to the grate, we looked in and saw the whole cell, by means of two wax tapers burning before a crucifix against the

inner wall of the chamber. There was a double-barred window at the other end of the cell, which from its aspect must certainly open on the cemetery ; and a pallet, such as we all used, in a corner of the room. The light fell faintly and indistinctly on the bed, yet we saw one lying on it, in an almost lifeless state to all appearance, for we observed not that the figure moved. The window of the chamber being open, we felt the cold air blow upon us through the grate, and were not surprised to observe that the candles burnt unsteadily in consequence ; but the flickering light glancing on the pale face of the person in the bed, only made the aspect of death still more dreadful, and we stood looking earnestly, and, as it were, fixed to the place we had first taken. By the bed sat the Superieure, bending from time to time over the inanimate sufferer. At one time drying her own eyes with a white handkerchief, and at another wiping the clammy brow of the unhappy sister. Nor did she fail, even at this awful moment (I describe things as I then saw and comprehended them), to use such earnest entreaties that, late as it was, she would be persuaded to take some thought of her immortal soul, as might be expected from a sincere Roman Catholic.

“ Oh ! my daughter,” she said, “ my daughter ! be persuaded now in this moment, this last moment, perhaps, of your existence, to turn again to the bosom of that holy mother church which extends her arms to receive you, her lost one. Speak but a word, raise but a finger of that poor hand, and I will recall the father ; it is not yet too late. Say but a

word, and he shall be here this moment : but, ah ! no : and she shrieked—help—help, my God ! the spirit is departing—the breath, the breath—Oh for one hour of life—one moment of repentance. My daughter ! my daughter !” and she fell with her face on the bed, as in a swoon.

Pauline and I flew to force open the door : but not being able, we ran to the cell of Annunciata, bidding her hasten to the Superieure, and rousing the whole sisterhood with our shrieks.

“What new horror is this ?” said la Mere Genefride, running out into the gallery ; “it were better almost to be in the fires of purgatory, than to live as we now do.”

“Clarice is dying !” exclaimed Pauline, “and without the sacraments ! The Lord have mercy on her soul !”

“That,” remarked one of the sisters, “cannot be expected, unless the sacraments are duly administered. In default of this sacrament of extreme unction, all the sins she has committed since her last confession will be on her poor soul for ages : but how could they have neglected to administer it ?”

“You speak without reflection ;” said la Mere Genefride, “how could the sacrament be administered if she were not in a disposition to receive it. I have understood that she persisted to the last in refusing the assistance of Father Joachim.”

“Did you see her before she died, mother ?” I asked.

“No one has seen her, but through the grate,” she replied, “with the exception of Madame, who has

done all for her which the tenderest parent could do: but," she added, "what avail our tears for the poor creature? rather let us pray for her, and engage the Mother of Mercy in her cause: though I fear there is little hope;" and turning away, she went weeping to her cell, in which example she was followed by most of the sisters;—Pauline and myself taking the opportunity of not being observed to shut ourselves up together. But when together, what could we say to each other?—where were we to look for comfort? We were miserable indeed: but whence were we to seek for any alleviation of our sufferings? We wept a long time in extreme bitterness of soul, and then began to talk and reason with each other; then to lament the fate of Clarice, as lost for ever; then to recall the scene in the subterranean chapel, and to repeat all that she had there said, till at length a partial glimpse of truth began again to shed itself over our dark minds;—when the question presented itself, May it not be possible that Clarice has understood more of the truth than some of those who have condemned her? Can this complicated and contradictory system of religion be of divine origin? Are not our spiritual rulers taking more upon themselves than scripture authorizes? Wherefore, if they teach nothing but what the Bible approves, do they so carefully keep the Bible out of our sight?

Thus as alps on alps arise, so did one doubt after another rise in our minds, till the natural morning broke upon us; for the spiritual morning could not

yet have been said to have appeared to us, though the shadows of night were passing away.

We were anxious to know if Clarice were actually dead ; and watching for Annunciata as soon as it was light, she informed us that she had revived after we had seen her ; that the abbess had entertained some hope for her, for a short time ; and that she was still alive, though entirely insensible and suffering dreadful convulsions.

After matins, at which the attendance was very small, we again inquired. But we were not assured of her death till the afternoon ; and at midnight were summoned to attend the funeral. No reference was made to the manner of her death, I mean, with regard to her having refused the sacraments, in the circumstances of her burial, excepting that the ceremony was shortened, and that the faded crown in which she had made her profession was not placed on her head. This we all observed, and received it as a terrible token of the opinion the Superieure had formed of her spiritual state and present situation.

I never saw terror and dismay painted in such marked colours on any countenances in the degree in which it was depicted on those of the sisters, during that awful midnight service. Nor, were I to live for ever, should I forget the fixed and marble features of Annunciata, as she stood near the head of the bier, with her eyes riveted on that which lay thereon.

“It is done,” said Pauline, as we returned from the grave, “it is done. Alas ! sweet Clarice ! thou art now beyond their reach. Angelique, I am con-

vinced of what I said impatiently, that all has not been right; and that the blood of Clarice will not be unrevenged."

"Do you suppose that they have killed her?" I asked.

"No;" she answered, "the pestilence saved them the actual deed; but they have wished her death, and they have rejoiced in it."

"Good heaven! Pauline; what do you mean?"

"Our Lady forgive me," she replied, "if I have wronged any one: but if I saw not triumph—aye, murderous triumph! lurking under the hood of that Annunciata this night, I never saw it before, nor do I know the characters which betray it."

I have before remarked, that the horrors which had, as it were, pursued each other through the house, horrors which had nought of that which is simple, kind, or natural, to relieve by contrast,—like the frightful fresco in the Campo Santa at Pisa, called the triumph of death, in which the ravages of that king of terrors are represented under every imaginary and real modification, to the utter exclusion of one single ray of hope or joy,—had had the effect at first of so overwhelming me with grief, that I wept continually: but afterwards, when these scenes were prolonged, I became stupid, and was scarcely conscious of any feeling. Nature must be relieved, or sink beneath a weight which it is not formed to bear; and when no other relief is supplied, it is compelled to relieve itself by a sort of stupor, in which condition it becomes hardened to all that may befall it.

The reaction after this state of stupor is often so terrible as to endanger the reason ; especially in persons not enjoying the consolations of religion. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that this temporary stupefaction is a resource supplied by a kind Providence, to help the sufferer through trials which otherwise would be intolerable to flesh and blood. But whether the case be a common one or not, this I know, that after having paid the last tribute to the memory of Clarice, I became so stupid, so lethargic, that I looked on all things around me as a frightful vision in which I had no part, and from which nothing seemed able to awaken me. No ! if I had seen every one of the sisters lying dead at my feet, I believe that I should not have wept. Pauline suffered more than I did, at that time ; probably because she had naturally more elasticity of mind, and was more easily excited to hope than I was. Hence she was subject to greater and more frequent shocks and disappointments.

We had previously lost five of our number ; for we had buried the fair and blooming Marguerite, and another menial. Clarice was the sixth of our household whose obsequies we had attended. Another fearful pause followed that ceremony, during which no death occurred, nor did any person sicken : though we had some alarm for the Superieure, who, when she again appeared amongst us, which she did on the morning after the funeral of poor Clarice, looked so wan and abstracted, and was so incapable of exerting herself, that it was absolutely necessary for some one in the household to act in

her place. La Mere Assistante was dead, la Mere Aymee was too old, and la Mere Genefride refused to come forward. Indeed I believe that she was not required to do so.

Thus the authority naturally slid into the hands of Annunciata, who, sometimes in the name of the Superieure, but oftener without using that name, began to reform what she pleased to call the abuses, which had crept into the house during the late disorders. For instance, she forbade our going into each others' cells, and conversing so much with each other as we had done, on pain of complaint to the bishop. She re-established the usual number of prayers, that is, seven in the twenty-four hours, and added another, in consideration of the unhappy state of the household. She also enjoined private prayers and penances.

In all these things she was strongly supported by Father Joachim, who, on suspecting that some of us were privately somewhat restive, thundered an exordium in our ears, on the Sunday which followed the funeral honours paid to poor Clarice, in which he described, in the most lively colours, all the horrors of hell and the torments of the damned.

"Hell," said this preacher of evil news, "is in the centre of the earth; and all those who die in mortal sin are precipitated into it." And then he enumerated these mortal sins, namely, pride, avarice, luxury, anger, gluttony, envy and idleness; bringing the last of these to bear upon many present, because they loved their ease, he asserted, better than the services of religion, and were, as it were,

asleep, even when kneeling within the precincts of the chœur. He then returned to the subject he had selected, telling us poor affrighted creatures, that if we should die in the state of mortal sin in which most of us then were, we should assuredly be precipitated into hell, to suffer eternal and infinite pains, and the company of devils, which were to be our tormentors, and to be tormented with us.

In all this long and frightful exordium was not one ray of hope or comfort, of light or joy ; but, as I before said, I was in that state of dulness and insensibility, that I did not seem to care what was said to me ; and though I did not actually doubt what the father asserted, I was certainly of opinion that he was keeping back some part of the truth, and in fact exhibiting a garbled statement of the dealings of the Almighty with his creatures.

This sermon afforded subject of conversation at dinner, and gave Annunciata occasion, the Superieure being absent, to reprove us so severely, and with so great an air of superiority, on the sort of spirit we had lately shown, with regard to seeking rest and repose, rather than endeavouring to obtain merit by our good works, that it was with some difficulty that we could restrain ourselves from demanding by what authority she had presumed to pass so severe a censure on the actions of persons who were many of them her seniors in the establishment. La Mere Genefride, however, took upon herself to answer her, saying, that she thought it somewhat out of season, when the pestilence was actually within our walls, to require any unusual severities

from the few sisters remaining in health ; but Annunciata reproved her with such an air of superior sanctity, as made her shrink into herself, proceeding, at the same time, to enlarge upon the merit of prayer and penitence, especially under such circumstances as we then were, and to bring forth all the arguments for mortifying the flesh, commonly brought forward by persons of her persuasion,—alleging that these efforts should never be relaxed, inasmuch as the first of saints can never deserve the final grace, or the grace of perseverance, even by the most meritorious efforts.

“That is,” replied Pauline, “you mean to assert, that we never can attain a state of holiness so exalted as to be assured that we shall persevere to the end.”

“We cannot merit the grace of perseverance,” replied Annunciata, “because, in order that God should grant us this final and infinite favor, namely, the assurance that we shall die in a state of grace—we must merit infallible and efficacious assistance, to prevent us from sinning in the hour of death.”

“From whence,” returned Pauline, with that air of arch simplicity which her features so easily assumed, “do you derive these principles, sister Annunciata? Are they found in the Holy Scriptures?”

Annunciata gave her a searching look, and seemed to me to be more disconcerted and embarrassed than I had often seen her, but recovering herself presently, she answered, “I teach you nothing but what is authorized by the high authorities of the only true and perfect church on earth.”

“Are we to consider you, sister Annunciata,” asked Pauline, “as our future ruler in this house? Do pray inform us in what light we are to look upon you; in order that we may shape our conduct accordingly.”

“That question,” replied the nun, with perfect calmness, “might as well be addressed to Madame; I am only what she makes me; I merely take the place which is assigned me by my superiors.”

“All that I have to request,” resumed Pauline, with equal calmness, “is, that I may know what that place may be; as much that concerns me must depend upon it.”

“I do not quite comprehend,” returned Annunciata, “how my situation in this family should concern you, sister Pauline.”

Pauline made no answer, and it was apparent that Annunciata found it difficult to retain her calmness of deportment any longer, though she made strong and visible efforts to do so, and finally succeeded.

That same evening the Superieure called us into her presence, and then in a very solemn manner informed us that it was determined by the spiritual rulers of the house, amongst whom she enumerated the bishop, Father Joachim, and herself, that the place of la Mere Ursule, as la Mere Assistante, should be filled up by the sister Annunciata, as a step to the place of Superieure, in case of her own death; “which event,” she added, “if I am doomed to suffer, for any length of time, what I have lately gone through, cannot be far distant; although I am entitled, by my age, to look forward to spending many

years with you my children." And she wept as she spoke, and exhibited a countenance much altered by recent suffering.

The sister Annunciata was universally dreaded, if not hated, in the house. This declaration, therefore, was not received without some manifestations of discontent; to which, however, few dared to give utterance any farther than by expressing their earnest hopes that their present Superieure might long be spared to them.

"I shall not leave you the sooner, my children," she replied, "for having informed you of these arrangements; neither would you lose any thing by my removal: the sister Annunciata being every way, from her superior sanctity, her knowledge of all matters regarding the especial duties of those devoted to our Holy Mother, and the nobility of her birth and carriage, fully as fit as I am for the important office which I fill; and more fit," she added, "when the painful nature of some of my duties are considered; inasmuch as she has not that weakness of heart which has made me bow beneath the strokes, which it has pleased the Supreme Ruler of all things to lay upon me within the last few weeks."

The Superieure melted into tears, as she uttered these last words; and that very weakness of heart, of which she complained, seemed to many of us that very part of her character which we should most miss in her intended successor. Yet what weakness or softness she alluded to we could not understand; for certainly we had always found her sufficiently severe.

Annunciata was not present during that part of the conference which I have related ; but, being called for, she entered with her arms folded and her eyes cast down, with all that show of proud humility and affected meekness, which the ambitious well know how to put on whilst ascending the ladder, and which they equally well know how to put off, when they have acquired the highest round. God forgive me, if I wrong this young woman ! but I certainly believe that ambition was so predominate a passion in her mind, that there was no crime at which she would have hesitated, to remove a hindrance to the gratification of this passion.

Having entered, she was presented to us as one to whom, notwithstanding her youth, we were to look up as to a Superieure ; and when I afterwards learned that she was related to the bishop, who was the spiritual head of the household, I ceased to wonder at her proposed elevation, although both Pauline and I wondered at the influence she had acquired over the Superieure, who had always appeared to us to be a woman of spirit.

It was six o'clock in the afternoon when we were dismissed from the presence of the abbess. I would have my reader mark the hour, and ask himself if the objects of ambition, however high, are worthy the pursuit of rational creatures,—knowing, as they must do, how uncertain are all earthly possessions, and how suddenly all that we have so eagerly desired may be torn from our grasp ; and how often it happens that there is a canker at the root, which embitters even the short moments of possession.

It was natural for the eyes of the household to be upon the sister Annunciata during the whole of next day : some looking upon her with eager curiosity, in order to ascertain in what manner she would bear her honours ; others eyeing her in the spirit of envy ; and a third description of persons beholding her with that dull wonder, with which inferior minds are apt to contemplate all such as are suddenly raised above them, in however small a degree. It was equally natural also, that Pauline and I should speak of her when the first opportunity offered of being alone, which was at the hour of recreation at noon the next day.

We were walking in the garden, at the higher part of it, facing the open windows of the infirmary, in which three of the sick still lay, though, as we trusted, in a state of convalescence. We began our discourse by speaking of the changes which had been wrought in the house by the ravages of the fever, and I expressed my hope that the pestilence had fulfilled its commission, and that we might now be spared all future horrors of this kind.

“Angelique !” said Pauline, and looked me hard in the face.

“What do you mean ?” I asked.

“Nothing,” she replied, “if—but no more of this. See you not that poor Annunciata, how she veils her imperiousness under the cloak of holy meekness, as if—as if we could not discern that which lies beneath ;—that aching heart, that sense of the emptiness of ambitious gratifications, that worm gnawing at the root.”

“Why, Pauline,” I answered, “you but yesterday were raving at this poor Annunciata, and saying that if she were promoted, you would certainly take the black veil in another house; and now your whole heart seems to be drawn out in pity for her.”

“Because”—she replied, and looked inquiringly at me again; and then, changing the discourse, she spoke of the fever, and asked me if I had heard any of the sisters state that those who had been seized with this dreadful malady experienced any previous symptoms which might, had they been attended to, have warned them of what they had to apprehend.

“Mother of Mercy!” I exclaimed. “Dear Pauline, are you not well?” And I felt, dull as I had before been, that if I were to lose my Pauline, I should be lost indeed.

“No, my Angelique,” she replied, “there is no cause to be uneasy about me. But I am doing wrong to dwell on these things; I ought to recollect the entire confidence in God evinced in that subterranean chapel by the sweet Clarice; how she was enabled to maintain the truth without fear of man, and to retain her constancy to the last moment. Oh! Angelique, the more I think of it, the more am I convinced that Clarice was right.”

“And we, in consequence, all wrong,” I answered; “but I cannot reflect—I cannot reason! What is to become of us, if the church in which we trust is a deceitful one?”

“God help us!” replied Pauline, “the Lord have mercy upon us! Oh! that I could but once obtain the sight of a volume of the Holy Scriptures. Let

the reformed churches, as they call them, be corrupt, as they are said to be ; yet, at least they have not this sin to lay to their charge, namely, that they withhold the scriptures from their people."

I had remarked, during this conversation, that Pauline had more than once dropped certain imperfect and broken hints, which at one moment seemed to bear reference to Clarice, and at another to Annunciata. I had pressed her several times to explain these hints, but she always put me off, leaving, at the same time, however, a sort of nameless dread upon my mind, and this dread was associated with Annunciata ; for all anxiety with regard to poor Clarice was now necessarily at an end.

That same night we were all assembled at complines in the chœur. Annunciata had taken her place by the side of the Superieure ;—my eyes were from time to time directed towards her ; she stood in an attitude which I could not understand—it was not natural, yet I hardly knew why it was not so. The glare of the lamp fell upon her face—her beautiful face ; the expression of that too was singular. She was at the head of the circle of sisters, I was at the other end of that circle, and the Kyrie Eleeson was rising in full chorus to the vaulted roof when suddenly a flash of brilliant and burning crimson mounted to the cheeks of her on whom I was thus intently gazing, adding a sudden and unnatural lustre to her dark Italian eye ; at the same moment she began to lose the firmness of her posture, and suddenly fell back from that seemingly holy circle which she was doomed never again to join.

There was an immediate cessation of the choral harmony, the last imperfect note rising into a frightful and almost universal shriek; whilst one and another shrunk back from the fainting sister, exclaiming, "Mere de Misericorde, la peste, encore la peste, toujours la peste!"

"I knew it would be thus," said Pauline, who had been the first to raise the head of the unhappy sister; "I felt that it would be thus. Oh! Clarice! sweet Clarice! thou art now avenged."

I believe that I alone heard or understood this exclamation; but it was terrible to hear the wailings of the poor abbess, who had thrown herself on the pavement by the side of Annunciata; and truly her affrighted countenance was enough to fill every mind with horror. But the menials were lifting the sister, for the purpose of bearing her to the infirmary, when the abbess exclaimed, "Not to the infirmary—not to the infirmary—to my chamber." Annunciata had not spoken since she had fallen, till she had felt herself raised and had heard these words, "to my chamber,"—when, struggling convulsively, and speaking with effort—"No, no," she said; "not there, within that chamber—where she stood and knelt and prayed; and where that corpse"—the Superieure placed her hand on her lips, saying, "Poor child, she raves—she knows not what she says—but do not heed her; obey my orders—convey her to my chamber, I will attend her myself—yet one moment and I will follow her—but this is too much;" and she clasped her hands, and raised her eyes, as if invoking mercy from above. Good God! thou alone canst tell what

was then passing in her mind ; Oh ! who can appreciate the weight of crime and woe which she was, from that moment, doomed to sustain nearly alone ; for with Annunciata failed the last of her female confidants.

Well do I remember her figure as she stood looking up towards the ceiling of the chœur ; but my attention was immediately drawn from her to the wretched sister whom they were bearing away out of our sight, and there were not many then present who ever saw her more. A few days finished the tragedy, and the noble and beautiful daughter of Colonna was the last victim of the terrible pestilence, of which I have already said so much. Her grave was side by side with the plot of earth dedicated to her who had once been her chosen companion and most intimate associate ; and thus would the memory of both these eminently beautiful sisters soon have perished together, had not certain circumstances arisen which connected the disastrous history of the unfortunate Clarice too intimately with my own fate, to render it possible for me to forget the most trivial circumstances which I had ever known as relating to her. Although the time which I spent in the convent was very short ; yet to look back upon it, and to view all the workings of my mind during that interval of my life, I could imagine that I had spent more years than in truth I had spent months under that roof.

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLES FROM WITHOUT.

It was July when I was professed; the pestilence had occurred some weeks afterwards; it had continued about a month in the house, and from that period till the end of September nothing of any importance happened; but to say how deeply sad we were all this time would be impossible. Our numbers were diminished; several of our leading characters were no more, and it seemed that others were likely to follow, for la Mere Genefride was thoroughly depressed, and the Superieure seemed to be quite unable to rouse herself. Indeed her deportment was so extraordinary after the death of Annunciata, and she was so nervous and irritable, and so filled with superstitious terrors, that it was very evident that she was hardly fit for her station.

In the meantime, the troubles without were scarcely less than those within the house. The spirit of revolution and democracy had taken such hold of the lower classes in St Siffren, and such fearful tumults were continually excited, that many of the better classes of the people were compelled to quit the town in all haste; and the noise of the uproars within the walls not unseldom reached to the very courts of the convent. Those who have been

in the neighbourhood of a town in an uproar of this kind, may be aware of the numerous alarming sounds which proceed from it. Sometimes, for instance, the roar of an intoxicated mob ; again, the shrieks of distress, or the acclamations of persons accomplishing mischief ; with the tintamarre of drums, bugles, trumpets, bells, hammers, and what not ; and now and then the smoke of bonfires, and the sulphureous odour of rockets and wheels, and other fireworks.

There are no creatures on earth so timid as nuns ; and when any of these symptoms of disorder reached our senses, to see how we all herded together, like frightened deer, and how miserably helpless we all looked, would have excited merriment in the breast of any one who did not properly consider that our situation was really quite as pitiable as it appeared to be.

It was one morning, after a night in which our quiet had been more than usually disturbed, that my friend, Madame Verani, appeared at the gate of the convent, earnestly requesting to see me and the Superieure. She was evidently in haste, and much agitated. The Superieure obeyed the call, taking me with her, and leaning upon my arm, in a state of high nervous excitement, as she descended to the parlour behind the grille. I immediately saw, by the raised colour of my friend, that she was in much perplexity, and she opened the conference by informing us, “ That she and Monsieur Verani, with their infant son, were about to leave St Siffren, where they could not possibly remain in safety many weeks longer ; and that they thought it best to go before

things came to extremity." She was proceeding, when the Superieure, laying her hand on my arm, exclaimed, "Oh, Angelique! what is to become of us?" and then falling back in her chair, yielded to a violent flood of hysterical tears.

Madame Verani, at the same instant, gave me a significant glance, and I contrived, whilst seeming to be busy about the Superieure, so to edge myself between her and the grate, as to receive a packet in my hand, and to convey it into my pocket; for nuns wear pockets, and mine was very convenient to me at this moment. Having effected this purpose, my friend took a hasty leave of us; and as the eyes which had once so sharply watched the novices were closed for ever, I soon found an opportunity to open my packet, Pauline being present.

These communications were of intense interest, both to me and to Pauline. The letters, which were one from Madame Verani to me, another to poor Clarice from her brother, and a third from some relations whom Pauline had in Switzerland, tended all to the same purport. They gave a frightful idea of the state of the country as it regarded politics; and added, that there was a report gone out in the town, that a religieuse had been confined twenty years in the dungeons of the convent, and that the magistrates and populace threatened to break in and ascertain the fact for themselves. It further stated, that the situation of the sisters would be horrible indeed, if exposed, without protection, to the brutality of the infuriated mob; and concluded with an earnest entreaty, backed by every argument which friend-

ship and family love could bring forward, that we, that is, the three sisters, Clarice, Pauline, and Angelique (though I should say that these were not the names used in the letters), would be persuaded, should any tumult occur, to tie a knot in our veils, and deliver ourselves up to the guidance of such persons as should claim us under that token, *of the knotted veil*.

“What shall we do?” I said to Pauline.

“Do!” she replied. Can you hesitate when Providence thus opens the door for us? Shall we not fly from this place of horrors? Oh! that Clarice could be with us. What will her brother feel when he knows that she is no more?” and we both wept from the idea of what this faithful brother would suffer when told of the dreadful end of his sister—dreadful as to this world, and all worldly considerations.

The question next occurred, shall we endeavour to give any alarm to the abbess? but we were prevented from pursuing this inquiry by another suggestion—is there, or is there not, any person in confinement in the dungeons? and may we not hasten the destruction of this miserable individual by this warning? even if we could give it with safety to ourselves. Being restrained by this reflection, we dared not to speak directly on the subject of our communication, though we gave many hints to the mothers and sisters, asking them what they proposed to do, should the convent of St Siffren be treated like that of St Claire, at Nice?

“If it should be so ordained,” replied la Mere Aymee, “why, I will e’en lay me down among the

ruins, and there will I lie and give up the spirit ; for here have I dwelt through a long life under the protection of the Mother of Mercy, and here will I remain ; and here will I lay my old bones, whilst my flesh mingles with the dust of those who are gone before."

"Mother," said Pauline, for we had got her by ourselves, beyond the hearing of the rest of the household ; "what is to become of sister Agnace, when the dungeons are laid open ?"

"Agnace !" said the old lady, starting, "what do you know of her ?"

"Oh !" said Pauline, "I know all about her ; I know her whole history."

"And who told it, daughters ?" she asked.

"That tongue," replied Pauline, "which will never move again."

"Ay !" exclaimed the mother, who, as I before said, was nearly childish, "she knew it all, and it was she who advised that she should be put out of the way. It was a sad business, daughters. The poor thing was so young ; she was not more than eighteen : she would not be fifty where she now living."

"And she is living, you know, mother," said Pauline.

"I cannot say," replied the mother, "I was never in their confidence : but I always understood that she had died some ten years after she had been incarcerated."

"Who told you, mother, that she had died ?"

"I cannot bear it in mind," she replied ; "but it

was well known when—but my memory is gone.—
Did she not die of the pestilence ?”

“When ?” asked Pauline.

“Were you not speaking of that poor Clarice ?”
returned the mother.

“No :” replied Pauline, “of Agnace. Is she dead,
or is she still in confinement ?”

“What, in this house !” exclaimed the mother ;
“Agnace, did you say ? how should she be living.
It was thirty years ago, I tell you.”

“But what did they confine her for ?” asked Pauline.

“They knew best,” returned the old nun. “What
am I that I should judge my superiors. They did as
the church directed. Is not our holy mother church
infallible ?” and she crossed herself, and mumbled a
prayer ; sinking again into her usual state of quiet
imbecility.

“Poor soul ! at any rate,” remarked Pauline, “she
is not one of the deceivers ; she at least, I trust, is
free from this crime.”

“Deceivers,” I repeated ; “your principles are
changing, Pauline.”

“It may be so :” she answered, “but this poor
Agnace !”

“God only knows,” I replied, “but I am weary of
all this mummary and mystery. I have lost my con-
fidence in my spiritual guides. I am ready to doubt
all religion, and to fancy that it is all made up by
ambitious men and women for their own ends.”

“What !” said Pauline, “have you forgotten Cla-
rice, and all that she said in that awful subterraneous

scene? Can you for an instant suppose that there is no reality in that which supported a creature so young, so weak, so helpless in all appearance, under circumstances of such inconceivable horror as those in which she stood, and where there was no wondering world around to admire her constancy, or condemn her obstinacy? Oh! Angelique, there must be more in religion than we have yet learnt."

I recollect little more of this conversation. The harrowing scenes which soon followed, have effaced the particulars of it from my mind.

It was about four days after this—days in which nothing occurred, as far as I remember, and in which we followed, as usual, our dull round of formalities—when, being in the garden with Pauline soon after nones, and being deeply engaged in conversing upon the extraordinary purport of the letters which had been brought to me by Madame Verani, we were startled, during a pause of our discourse, by a sort of low rushing sound, resembling, more nearly than any thing else I can conceive, the breaking of a dam at a very great distance, and the consequent bursting of some torrent.

"Hark!" exclaimed Pauline.

The rushing sound continued; hardly becoming more distinct or audible.

"It is the wind," I said: for although the day was clear, there was a considerable agitation caused by the air among the higher branches of the cedars.

"No:" said Pauline, "no: it is not the wind;" and she looked terrified.

"Is it a mountain torrent?" I said, "if so we should

see the brook swell presently ;” (I have before mentioned that a stream ran from the hills through the convent garden) and we immediately walked towards the rill : but saw no change in it. It was keeping its gentle course through its flowery channels, and we stood awhile on its banks.

“ Ah, Angelique !” said Pauline, “ why am I so sad, so full of apprehension ;” and clasping her hands, “ Oh, God !” she exclaimed, “ merciful God ! direct and guide us. If we are in error, remove the clouds of doubt and darkness which obscure our minds ; lead us into the truth ; enable us to fix our confidence where only it should be placed ; and as to the rest—as to this present world—do with us according to thy good pleasure.” So saying, she threw her arms around me suddenly, adding, “ But if it be thy good pleasure, Lord, grant that I may not be parted from my own sweet Angelique.”

For a moment we seemed to be quite carried away by our feelings : but the next instant, recollecting ourselves, we were made aware of an increase in the sound which had first excited our fears.

“ Good heavens !” exclaimed Pauline, “ they are up in St Siffren ; the town is in tumult. Can you not distinguish the tones of human voices ; and it is a general and appalling tumult.” So saying, she ran into the house, and meeting several of the sisters, who were scattered about, she spread the alarm through the house. There was a narrow pointed door which opened from one of the chambers upon a winding stair, which led up to a tower, from whence the whole town of St Siffren might be seen. This door

was always kept locked: but the Superieure, hearing of the alarm, sent for the portress; and having caused it to be opened, she ascended, with some of the elders, and we, the younger part of the family, were not backward in following her. There were narrow slits of windows presenting themselves at every turn of these stairs, some opening towards the mountains, and others in the direction of the valley; whilst those on the south looked directly down upon the town below, and seemed terribly high, from the exalted site of the convent. Having reached one of these, the noise which we had heard from the garden burst violently upon our ears. It was that of an enraged populace, so aptly described in scripture by the roaring of the sea; and accompanied with the clang of martial instruments. We had heard noises of this kind before, but never simultaneous and terrific, like those which arose to our ears at that moment; and we also observed the signal of desolation, namely, the tri-coloured flag, fixed on the summit of the great dome of the church of St Siffren, from which the cross had already been torn down.

“Great heaven!” exclaimed Pauline, “the moment for resolution is arrived—our deliverance or our death is at hand. Shall we speak? Shall we tell the Superieure what she has to dread!”

“Agnace,” I said, “that unhappy one in the dungeon, might we not thus fix her doom. No; let things take their course. If they have done this sin, they have every thing to fear; and they well deserve their fate. If not, God will protect them.”

At that instant the Superieure passed us, hastening

down the steps with the utmost precipitance, and giving directions to the portress to send immediately for Father Joachim. But the Abbess being gone, and many of the elder religieuses having retired to their cells, no doubt in order to invoke the aid of those helpless idols who themselves were doomed to speedy destruction, several of us younger ones remained at the windows of the tower, fixed to the spot, and scarcely remarking the approaching shadows of the evening, until the dark outlines of the great church and bastions of the town were marked on the horizon, and a new light burst upon the scene, from the lurid glare of a huge bonfire, which, as far as we could discern, had been lighted up in the great square of the town, called la Place. The light from this fire was such, as to show the figure of all the neighbouring buildings, and to cause the copings, which in many instances were of tin, to glare fearfully, and as if they were already ignited. The uproar increased at the same time, and most terrifying yells arose, from one moment to another, from amid the troubled city. Still, however, there was no indication that any attack was meditated upon the convent; and as we had omitted the service, called vespers, allowing the usual hour to pass away in our terror, we were called to complines, perhaps an hour earlier than usual.—Father Joachim was not present, another person officiating in his place.

It was the end of the month of September, and it was quite dark before the service was finished: but just as we were about to conclude it, a tremendous shout, as if close to the convent, filled the whole

chapel, and died away along the passages which branched from it. This shout was accompanied by the heavy tramping of many feet; whilst the red glare of torches shone into the chapel, rendering the Gothic outlines of the windows near the roof distinctly visible; illuminating at the same time the guildings and fresco paintings on the ceiling, and seeming, as it were, almost to animate the figure (larger than life) of the foundress of our order, which was painted in the centre of the roof. A tremendous knocking, or rather hammering, at the door of the house next ensued; and in an instant, closing our books, and throwing them from us, we all fled in different directions, some to one part of the house, some to another, whilst Pauline and I made our way into the cemetiere, attempting to open a door which led from thence into the garden: but before we could ascertain whether we could open this door or not, I heard my own name called, and the next moment the portress, all trembling and in great alarm, informed me that I must hasten to the parlour and present myself to the bailiff of St Siffren.

“Gracious heaven!” I exclaimed, “and for what?”

The portress could not answer this question; but forcibly separating Pauline from me, for that faithful friend would, I verily believe, have followed me unto death, she drove me before her (I know not how better to express myself) into the parlour, where I found the abbess in conversation with a man of the coarsest aspect and manner, who was without the grille. This man was seated, though the Superi-

eure was standing, and he wore a cocked hat gar-
nished with a tri-coloured rosette.

“This young woman,” he said, as if carrying on a speech already commenced, “that is the kins-
woman of citizen Verani, is the person I desire to
see. Citizen Verani is a friend of mine. I therefore
choose to befriend his cousin. You have nothing
further to do with my motives, nor am I disposed to
listen to your superstitious and ridiculous jargon. I
understand that you people of the cloister are deep
in the merchandise of lies : therefore I advertise you
that I know the citizen Cecile Recordi, who was
living awhile with her relations in the town of St
Siffren, and that I choose to speak with her myself.”
Then seeing me, “Come forward, young woman,”
he said, “put aside your mummeries, and exhibit
your face ; may be I have seen a worse.”

I looked at the Superieure, in order to ascertain
what she would wish me to do or say : and this short
delay was the means of bringing a volley of oaths
and blasphemies from the dreadful reprobate ; al-
though, when he had duly examined me through
the bars, he laughed aloud, and passed some low
joke respecting the cage, whose bars he swore he
would speedily break, in order that if there were any
more young birds, such as I was, confined therein,
they might speedily find their wings. Then adding,
“Well, fair citizen, I wish you to understand this
much, that you are now as entirely at liberty as I
am, and that you have nothing to do but to come
round to where I stand, and place your arm within
mine, and if you are not happy then, why all I can

say is this, that it will be more your own fault than mine ; and so much for you, citizen Recordi. But now for you !" he added, addressing the Superieure, whilst his coarse features worked with rage and scorn,—“do you flatter yourself, vile and hypocritical instrument of tyranny and hypocrisy, that your abominable doings are hidden from the world, and that the revenge of the people will not reach you sooner, or later. You tremble, I see ; and well you may ! I need but speak the word, and the justly infuriated populace will break in upon you, and compel you to give an account of your dark and secret transactions. But you have one more chance for your life, wretched woman ; produce the miserable creature whom you, and those who have gone before you, have incarcerated these many years. Go, this instant, and open her dungeon, and bring her out : or by”—and he swore a dreadful oath, “the populace shall be let in upon you, and you shall be torn limb from limb.”

The Superieure, though more dead than alive, solemnly protested her innocence ; and assured him, that although she could not answer for what might have been done before her time, there neither then was, or ever had been, a person confined in a subterraneous cell since she had filled the place of Superieure.

The bailiff shook his head, and replied, “Well woman, you have sealed your own perdition—it is done !” and muttering something, of which we heard only certain blasphemous expressions, which made our blood freeze in our veins, he rushed out

of the parlour door, leaving us behind the grate, in a state of horror which I cannot describe. By this time all fear of the Superieure had passed from my mind, shrinking, as it were, before the more terrible images excited by the blasphemous democrat; and I, therefore, being alone with her, as I was, dared to entreat her, if there were any person confined in the dungeons, instantly to set her free; and permit her to be conveyed, by the garden gate, into some place where she might be concealed from the populace. I even offered to be her agent in this work; and to soothe and reconcile the sufferer so far to what was passed, as to prevent her from appearing against her persecutors.

“I assure you, and you may believe me,” replied the abbess, “that you are under a deception; and I am willing now to declare, in the name of the sovereign queen of heaven, that at this moment, to the extent of my belief, there is no such unhappy creature under this roof.” She was proceeding, when a shout more near, more terrible than any I had ever heard before, burst upon our senses, entering from without, and being re-echoed by the wild shrieks of the sisters within. This horrible shout, which resembled what I could have imagined to be the yells of demons, had nothing in it of distinctness excepting the words “a bas, a bas,” too well understood by us; and it was followed by a rush of many heavy feet, and the noise of many hammers, against the inner door of the entrance. Swift as thought I raised the corner of my veil, and tied a large knot in it, and then fled after the abbess, who had darted

from the parlour, though I presently lost sight of her, finding myself in a narrow passage which led, one way to the cemetiere, and another into the interior of the house. The passage was arched, or vaulted, and nearly dark, excepting where the light from the heavens, in which the moon, not far from the full, was rising amid flickering clouds. The silver beam rested on the grassy plot, where many a slight inequality in the surface of the ground marked the resting places of our companions, recently added to the multitude of those who, during ages gone by, had lived and died in the convent.

At the moment that my eye first extended through the dark vista of the passage, and rested on the cross, another wild shriek burst upon my ear, and I beheld several of the terrified sisters rush through the burying-ground, and throw themselves at the foot of the cross, clinging to the pedestal, and pressing their faces upon the cold marble, whilst more than one man, following them from the house, endeavoured to drag them from their place of refuge; uttering at the same time such blasphemous jests as filled my whole soul with horror. The next moment the figure of a man darkened the passage; and he, probably seeing the outline of my form, came rapidly forward and attempted to seize me: but I sprang by him and flew along the cloisters, by which (as I have before described) the cemetiere was surrounded. There, drawing myself within the shade of one of the clustered pillars, I trusted that I was unobserved, though my heart beat with such violence that I could hardly distinguish the tumult within

from that which was without: for the clamours of the frantic mob, and the reverberation of heavy strokes (for they were beating down the doors, and tearing up the images, in every part of the house) came rushing along the galleries, and sweeping round the cloisters, with a force so deafening and appalling as absolutely to deprive me, for some moments, of my senses. But a comparative stillness soon followed; when I was able to recollect myself again.

The ruffians who had attacked the terrified sisters at the foot of the cross, had been called off to some other work of mischief; and there was, as it were, a pause within the cemetiere;—and truly it was a solemn scene which I then beheld in the fitful light of the moon; as the clouds passed over the disk of the planet, at one moment revealing every object, at another, shrouding all in a dubious light, in which only the white veils of the sisters, who were clinging to the cross, could be distinguished. I was in agonies for my Pauline, and ready to run all hazards in order that I might again rejoin her, and I was in the very act of leaving my place of refuge for this purpose, when suddenly several voices became distinct, as if proceeding from persons who had separated themselves from the mass of the people; and shortly afterwards various figures of men appeared in the court, and one advancing in the direction where I stood, discerned my figure, and extended a hand to seize me. Fear made me active, and I ran from him, crossing the court, and making a desperate plunge at a wooden door which, as I well knew,

opened into a large wide outhouse, where the bier, the spades, and mattocks, and all other apparatus and instruments belonging to the burying-ground were always kept. The door of this gloomy place, being somewhat mouldy, gave way immediately: yet not so suddenly but that the individual who was pursuing me had obtained a full sight of my figure; and I was immediately aware that although I had pulled the door after me, he had opened it and was actually in the dark chamber with me.

CHAPTER VIII.

DELIVERANCE.

THOUGH I feared to stumble over the bier, yet I hastened onward, and presently saw a light through the chinks of something I took to be a door at the further end. This my place of refuge was, in fact, a charnel-house, into which many mouldering bones of those who had died perhaps ages past, had, from time to time, been thrown by the grave-digger. But, having reached the door at the farthest end, I was unable to move it, though it shook in my hand, and I was on the point of giving myself up to despair, not knowing what indignity might be offered me next by the man of whose near approach I was aware, when a voice, which I instantly knew to be that of an educated person, though the accent was foreign, uttered these words: "The lady of the knotted veil has no reason to fear the person who now addresses her."

"Heaven be praised!" I exclaimed, "which has sent me a deliverer in my hour of utmost need;" and I extended my hand to the stranger with a feeling of that entire confidence which I never had reason to think misplaced.

"Deliverer, lady!" he answered; "we must not exult too soon. How are we to get out of this

place?" And he struck the door before mentioned with such force, that he made it shake violently, but it did not give way.

"This will not do, I fear," he said; "could we but gain the garden?"

I proposed that we should return, and endeavour to reach it in another direction, and I explained to him my anxiety for my dear Pauline.

"Be easy, madam," he replied; "she is safe:" but before he could add more, the glare as of a torch shone into the chamber, revealing the spades and mattocks, and heaps of remains, together with the bier in the centre of the apartment, of which the shade, accurately traced on the sandy pavement, reached the place on which we stood. By this same light I saw the person with whom I was so strangely associated, and had not a doubt but that I was with the brother of poor Clarice; but he did not mention his sister, and I also refrained from the painful subject, although, had I at that moment been willing to have entered upon it, I should not have had time; for he suddenly seized my hand, having observed a way to the left, in the farthest corner of the apartment, to which he drew me hastily, and had hardly brought me within its shade, when the persons who bore the torch entered in by the entrance from the burying-ground.

Immediately within the archway in which we had taken refuge, was a narrow winding stone staircase, up which we ran, and stood a moment to listen, with intense anxiety, to what was passing below. We heard many ruffian voices holding converse with

each other, and mingling their vile discourse (for vile indeed it was in every respect) with many blasphemous expressions and disgusting jests.

"She is not here, Jansen," said one of these persons; "this is a charnel-house, and we run the chance of awakening the pestilence, if we make a stir among these bones. If the bailiff desires her company, he may look for her himself, that is, if the search must needs be carried on in this charnel-house."

"What say you," said another, "of throwing a torch under yon bier; if it take fire it will burn out the bad air. Faugh! faugh! the place scents of death!"

We heard no more, nor did we stay to ascertain whether the proposal of igniting the bier were assented to, or not; but going softly up another round of the stairs, we presently found ourselves before a grated opening or window, beyond which were tall trees.

"I know where I am now," said my companion, "could we but escape through this window, we should be in the forest. I am acquainted with all the environs of this place," he added, "I have examined them too often to be mistaken, though I never actually discovered this opening; it is not so high from the ground but that we might get out. Now is our moment—the wretches are gone from below;" and instantly grasping the bars, he succeeded, after several violent efforts, in dislodging some of them, throwing them out on the ground below, with a quantity of plaster and stone, and leaving an open-

ing quite sufficient to permit us to force ourselves through: which opening being effected, "Now, lady," he said, "for courage and activity?" And, so saying, he extended his body through the breach, and seized the bough of the nearest tree; the next moment he had swung himself to the ground, and stood looking up to me from below.

"The distance is small, lady," he said; and he directed me how to manage my escape through the aperture, promising to receive me in such a way as to break my fall. "You are light, lady—do not fear. Remember, that strange as your situation may appear to be, you are with one who feels himself bound to serve you with the last drop of his blood, and to treat you with all honour and reverence."

There was not time for me to reply; I had no doubt of the honour of the person in whom I was trusting; and though I can hardly now tell how it was effected, I found myself the next instant on the grass without the walls, supported by the brother of the lamented Clarice.

"One moment, lady," he said, "for taking breath, and then we must away;" and giving me his arm, whilst he grasped my hand, he dragged me on through bushes, brambles, and high grass, whilst every step removed us farther from the gloomy prison from which we had escaped. As to speaking, I had not breath for it; but he who had been more accustomed to active life than I had been, was by no means so overpowered as I was. "Unfortunately," he said, "we have the water-course between us and the rendezvous of our friends; but there is a plank thrown

over the torrent somewhat above, by which we must pass ; in the meantime, we must keep in the shade of the bushes until we have crossed the water, lest we should be pursued. Should they discover the way by which we have escaped, they will follow us, without question. But take courage, and with the divine help, we shall be out of their reach in a few minutes."

Thus he comforted me, as he dragged me forward, giving me no time to look back, till we were arrived at some little distance from the convent, at a place where a narrow plank was thrown over the water-course, and on the eastern side of the fir-crowned hill, which I have spoken of as being seen from my cell. The path which we had traversed was shaded with brambles and low bushes, and as it lay somewhat under the course of the brook, was so swampy as to soak my shoes ; but these were minor evils, and I did not heed them ;—all my terror was of the pursuit of the bailiff or any of his people. The hill was green, and open on the other side of the rude bridge, and, a little way above this bridge, on the hill-side, was a chapel of the Virgin, with an altar and image. This had originally been a beautiful little edifice, in the style of the florid gothic, but it had been suffered of late years to fall into ruin, and to exhibit many manifestations of rapid decay.

The door of this chapel stood open, as we perceived when ascending the bank from where we had crossed the brook. We were not aware that there was any thing extraordinary in this appearance ; indeed we thought nothing of it, and were hastening past the chapel, when we were startled by the sound of a

voice as from the other side of the bridge, but lower down the valley. We could not distinguish what was said; but as we dreaded lest our figures might attract attention if we ventured forward over the hill at that critical moment, in which the moon happened to be shining forth in full splendour, we turned into the chapel, intending to wait there until the clouds should pass over the disk of the planet. Was this disposition of the clouds at that moment the effect of accident? Is there any thing throughout the universe which befalls by chance? "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and yet not one of them shall fall to the ground without your heavenly Father."

My companion and I did not speak one word as we stood in this extraordinary situation. We were listening with deep attention to every sound; but there was a dread stillness, nor did there even proceed a murmur from the convent. It appeared afterwards that the raging mob were at that crisis examining the dungeons and subterraneous chapel; and hence their clamours were deadened to those above the earth. The wind moaning in the fir trees which crowned the hill; the rippling of the water-course, and the occasional cry of the night-owl, were the only sounds which disturbed the solemn stillness. But we saw the moonbeams resting quietly on the grass below the porch of the chapel, and were inclined to feel impatient, because, in a night of clouds, such as that was, there was not one to cast a veil over the face of the planet.

Whilst hesitating whether we should wait a moment longer, or venture forward at all hazards, a low

rumbling sound, as beneath the earth, startled us both, so much so that I could scarcely restrain myself from shrieking; but I was enabled to command myself, though I trembled violently; nevertheless, we both, as with a spontaneous movement, drew closer within a recess in the wall which had probably been the shrine of some image. Another, and another alarm, as proceeding from beneath the pavement of the sanctuary, followed from one instant to another. The idea of an earthquake so forcibly seized our minds that we attempted not to move, but stood fixed to the place where we were; a rattling, underground, tremulous noise then ensued, and at this critical moment the figure of the Virgin, as we could just discern by the moonlight, began to shake and tremble, and before I could examine the nature of my feelings, which were terrible beyond any thing I had ever before experienced, a trap-door opened in the floor, and a red glare proceeded from it, and filled the whole chapel. If at that moment I thought that hell was yawning to swallow me up, it will not be a matter of astonishment to my reader, although, perhaps, that reader may be amazed, when I inform him that, the next instant, the father Joachim ascended through the door-way, drawing after him, or rather bearing in his arms, a sister of the order of Misericorde, and that he was followed by the Jesuit in his habit of a monk, bearing a torch. Amaze-ment now fixed both myself and my companion to our place, which was entirely in the shade within the niche in the wall; and thus we were neither seen nor suspected to be present.

The priests believed themselves to be alone; and

whilst the Jesuit carefully closed the trap-door, father Joachim, having laid the sister on the pavement, supposing her to be insensible, proceeded to draw the altar, which was of wood, over the door in the pavement; the Jesuit, whilst holding his lamp with one hand, endeavouring to assist him with the other. All this was but the work of a moment, and in that moment the sister, who had nearly fainted, began to revive and to raise herself from the pavement, which the father observing, grasped her arm, and drew her up with savage violence, saying, "You have cost us dear enough already; think not to escape us now; in the dungeons of the inquisition there will be no appeal;"—and he was proceeding, when she as it were slid through his arms upon her knees, wildly shrieking for mercy; and pleading rather for an instant death than the fate which was prepared for her.

I saw not her face, for it was shrouded by her veil; the light was also flickering and unsteady; but I thought of Agnace. Nor could I doubt but that this was the unhappy creature of whom the bishop had spoken, as of one never more doomed to see the light of day. I looked from her, and from the dreadful monks, to my own noble friend. I could feel, as he stood close to me, that he trembled, not indeed with fear, but impatience; but he was watching the moment when the unhappy nun should be set on her feet, at which instant he sprung from our hiding-place like a tiger from his lair, and seizing first the Jesuit, he dashed him to the ground, and by the same act extinguished the lamp, thus rendering it impossible for the priests to ascertain the number of their enemies. Dreadful and sounding was the

fall of the Jesuit, for the earth beneath was hollow and vaulted. I know not whether he that then fell ever rose again. Our champion next assailed the confessor; I heard the sound of deadly strife; it was a terrible moment, but the victory was soon decided in favour of our friend; and I next beheld the father rushing through the door-way of the sanctuary, and flying down the bank towards the little bridge.

“Now! now!” cried Mr Beaumont; “now is our moment. We must fly for our lives; there are more of these demons, no doubt, at hand. Heard we not voices but now issuing from the glen? Lady, follow me,” he added; and putting his strong arm round the waist of the rescued sister, he urged her forward. Nor was she slow in understanding that her deliverance depended upon present exertion. She used her utmost efforts, feeble as she was; and thus he hurried her along the side of the hill, in the direction opposite to the convent, whilst I followed closely on his path.

Having reached the north side of the hill, within the covert of the fir trees, he called aloud. A cheering voice was instantly returned: “Is all well, Edward?” said the voice.

“All well,” returned the other; “prepare the horses, William, and send help to meet us.” We made a few steps further before we were met by several sturdy mountaineers, who lifted up the trembling sister, and bore her swiftly away to the place of rendezvous, which was a shepherd’s hut at the northern foot of the so often mentioned fir-crowned eminence.

Being thus left with Edward Beaumont (for I was not able to keep up with the peasants), he asked

me anxiously who this poor persecuted female could possibly be? "It cannot be," he said, "surely it cannot be—my sister?"

"Oh! no," I answered. "No; impossible! sweet Clarice sleeps in peace. Her end was a blessed one; but this, no doubt, is Agnace; and I told him some little of what I had heard of this poor persecuted one.

He heaved a very deep sigh, and said, "All, no doubt, is right; but when informed by your friend this evening that I could never hope to see my Emily again on earth, it was an astounding blow. In time, I trust, that I shall be enabled to thank my God on her behalf, without that admixture of natural sorrow which, at this time, even embitters the delight I feel in having been thus enabled to rescue that poor victim of their barbarous policy."

The next moment I rushed into the arms of my beloved Pauline, at the entrance of the shed, who, after a burst of joy on beholding me, was exceedingly anxious to learn how our party had been thus augmented. I told her, in as few words as possible; and she seemed convinced, with me, that the poor sister, who had been thus wonderfully rescued by the brother of the lamented Clarice, could be no other than that Agnace of whom we had heard so many marvellous reports; but we had no lights in the shed, and there was not a moment for delay, for we were not at all secure from father Joachim; nor had we any means of knowing what numbers he might have with him in the valley. The horses were ready, for our active friends had provided every thing necessary for our escape. Pauline, being first mounted, was led away by her impatient cousin,

that same William of whom she had more than once spoken to me.

A demur had occurred how the rescued sister could be conveyed, as it was evident that she could not support herself on a horse; this was, however, soon settled by Mr Beaumont, who caused her to be lifted behind him, his horse being powerful, whilst he bound her to himself with her veil. This was considered as only a temporary expedient, and yet it answered until such a distance from the place of danger had been gained, as allowed opportunity for concerting some other plan. When all these arrangements were effected, we set out at full speed, and dashed down a steep ravine between two heights, little heeding the ruggedness of the road, so anxious were we to find ourselves at some distance from the scene of danger. Being at the bottom of this ravine, we stopped a few seconds to breathe our horses, when Pauline drawing up to me said, "Angelique, I cannot rest till I know who this poor sister is, who has been thus wonderfully preserved; can she be that same Agnace, of whom we have heard so much? or is she some other miserable victim of their barbarity?"

"Speak to her, madame," said Mr Beaumont; "but I doubt whether she can answer you, for her head has fallen on my shoulder. She breathes, indeed, otherwise I should fear that she were a lifeless corpse. Ask her if she knew my Emily?"

"Did you know Clarice, dear sister," said Pauline. She repeated the name in a low voice, and then added, "I should know her."

"Where," asked Pauline, "did you become acquainted with her?"

She made no answer.

“Was she with you in that dungeon,” resumed Pauline.

“Who can say?” replied the other; “who can tell what things were there?—the dead were there!”

“Where is Clarice now?” continued Pauline.

“They told me she was in the grave,” she replied: “under the sod—in that cold place—did they not bury her?”

“What do they call you, sister?” asked Pauline. “Do they call you Agnace?”

“I have no name,” she answered; “they made me nameless; they wiped away all memory of me.”

She spoke low and inwardly, and then uttered a sort of wild shriek, clinging closer to Edward, and saying, in a scarcely audible whisper, “Oh! gentle sir, take me away, take me away; they are wanting me to confess—to tell them all. Bid them take off those veils, and those black robes; they are come to question me, and they will carry me to the inquisitors.”

“It is of no use,” said Edward, turning to us; “these savages have bereft her of her reason; come on, we are losing time. Do you go before who are able; we are now about to descend a difficult pass; I will follow as speedily as I can; wait for us, who are behind, on the summit of the pass.”

This was done; Pauline and I, with William, went forward, and we had obtained the height some minutes before the rest of the party. From the edge of this pass we were to descend into a part of the country from whence the valley of St Siffren could be no longer seen. William, who kept close to Pauline, informed her that their plan was to proceed

by the shortest cut to the Lac de L——, by which they might pass immediately into a certain canton in the Swiss territories, and proceed without loss of time, and in a few hours, to the house of his father, M. d'Ivannois, who was in the rank of a farmer cultivating his own estate, and living, as we afterwards found, in a state of the utmost comfort. He further informed her, that they proposed to stop at a cottage a little league from St Siffren, where lived a peasant who was well known to his father; there they were to change their horses or mules, and the ladies were to be provided with clothes suited to the condition of women of middling rank in Sardinia. Here they were to take some refreshment, and then to proceed. William supposed that their journey from this cottage would take them nearly the whole of the next day, if not encroach on the night; but it seems that every precaution had been already taken to procure an easy passage for them from one country to the other. All this was told me by Pauline, as we went slowly up the rugged pass; but being arrived at the summit, we stopped again, not only to wait for those who were coming after us, but to take one farewell look at the convent, in which we had left many dear to us; and oh! how left!

But how shall I describe the scene which burst upon us, when having reached the highest summit of the pass, and emerged from the dark ravine where the pine trees met and mingled their branches above our heads, we turned towards the valley. There stood the ancient towers of Misericorde, nearer to us, as a bird would fly, than we had

any conception of. They seemed to fill the whole mouth of the pass, the hills on either side closing our view both to the right and to the left ; but oh ! horrible, affecting sight ! vivid flames were rising up amid the dark masses of Gothic masonry : whether from one of the courts, or from the building itself, we could not ascertain, but the red light flickered over the long slanting roofs, and intercepted every part of the great tower of the chapel, excepting the cupola and cross which surmounted it. We shrieked with horror when we saw this, and my heart smote me, remembering what the ruffian had said in my hearing, respecting his purpose of throwing his torch under the bier. I felt that I ought, at all hazards, to have run down and endeavoured to have prevented the mischief, and I wept without controul, whilst Pauline broke out into the most vehement exclamations of grief. “ Oh ! scene of our sorrowful abode for many months,” she exclaimed, “ proud ancient towers, place of the graves of many holy sisters, and is this to be thy fate ? Is thy end so sudden ? so terrible ? so overwhelming ? And, oh ! my mothers and sisters ! to what are you now exposed ? Oh, God ! my God ! in wrath remember mercy.” William would have spoken comfort to her, but she wrung her hands, and seemed as if she would have sprung from her horse, and run back to the burning convent.

Surely I never beheld an agony of grief more touching, more affecting : but she was silent in a moment. I did not immediately perceive the cause. It was one hour before midnight, and the convent clock was tolling eleven. It tolled from the tower,

whose base was already wreathed in flame. It was never, perhaps, to sound again : but its motion was not precipitated ; its tone was full and solemn as aforetime, and we listened till the last deep note had died away along the valley. Then followed a new burst of anguish from Pauline, and fresh floods of tears from me.

It was vain for William, whose features as yet I had never seen, to strive to console his lovely cousin. All he could do was to divert her attention, and to bring upon himself a charge of hardness of heart, even at the moment in which he was risking so much for her sake ; but he was probably aware that this charge would soon be retracted, for he betrayed no symptom whatever of ruffled feelings, but led our horses further along the pass, notwithstanding our entreaties to be permitted to look one moment more on the object of our painful regret. There we were speedily joined by the rest of the party. It seems that our suffering sister had fainted, and could be no longer held on the horse ; and it had been decided that the peasants should hastily form a litter of boughs and trees, and so bear her along to the cottage before mentioned, thence to proceed, as circumstances would permit. It was also decided, that it would be best for William to go on with Pauline and me to the house of M. d'Ivannois.

We made several objections to this plan, saying, that we would not leave our afflicted sister ; but they were absolutely overruled by our new and kind masters, and two of the servants or peasants belonging to our party having joined us, we were led forward without further consultation ;—William having

promised to return immediately to meet the other party, as soon as he had brought us into a place of security.

It was of no use for Pauline to murmur. She had met with her match (to use a somewhat vulgar phrase) in her young Swiss cousin, who was as lively as she was, and always ready to bring her to reason, by a steady kindness, by which her over-excited feelings were gradually restored to the desirable equilibrium.

I will not say a vast deal respecting our journey, from the time we left Mr Beaumont till we arrived at our peaceful and happy place of refuge. Having ridden briskly for about an hour, through very troublesome passes, we arrived at a cabin, where a good woman received us, and helped us to change our dresses. This was a precaution necessary to be taken before daylight. The dresses provided for us were those of such peasants of the neighbourhood as might be supposed to be somewhat above the lowest degree: we left our dresses of the cloister behind us. Then, having taken some refreshment, we renewed our journey, and proceeded to the next small town; which we reached by daylight. We breakfasted, and continued our route without accident, till we came to a small frontier town of Piedmont, being provided with proper passes by the care of William, who happened to be well acquainted with the commandant; and about six in the afternoon reached the border of the lake. This we crossed in a boat, or, rather I should say, navigated for some length, for we went far up towards the head of the lake, where it was narrowest, and where the mountains

formed precipices on either side ; and our course was so long that it was ten at night before we reached our destined landing place.

In describing our extraordinary escape from the convent, I am sensible that a renewal of the agitating feelings which I felt, during that escape, has again affected my mind, and imparted itself to my pen: but being arrived, in imagination, on that beautiful lake, far removed from all those horrors with which I had been surrounded for months past, I feel a renewal of that peace which I then experienced whilst seated in that boat, and gliding along those waves with my Pauline by my side. Not that my contentment was perfect—for where is there perfect contentment on earth. I was anxious for my gallant deliverer, the brother of Clarice, and the poor sister under his care ; and I was distressed for the friends I had left in the convent ; and I then felt that they were all my friends, whom I had known at St Siffren. These were, at that time, the especial objects of mine and Pauline's anxiety ; and more than this, we were excessively fatigued ; yet our minds were in such tumult that we could not sleep ; though the motion of the boat, the rippling sound of the water, as it rushed by the little bark, and the soft breezes which blew over the lake, might have induced the repose which was so requisite.

“What would I give to know the name of that afflicted sister who was rescued by poor Clarice's brother ?” said Pauline.

“It is Agnace, I cannot doubt ;” I answered ;
“Agnace of whom we have heard so much : but in that case she must be fifty years of age at least.”

“Well,” said William, “were she sixty or a hundred, it would make no difference in Edward Beaumont’s treatment of her. Oh, Pauline !” he added, “when you know more of Edward you will see that religion such as his, is more to be admired, more really excellent, than all the ostentatious pretensions of that abominable system of will-worship which you have abandoned.”

“William,” replied Pauline, be not too sure of me. Have I yet said that I am convinced ?”

“No :” he replied, “you will be careful how you do that, my fair cousin, inasmuch as a great deal may depend thereon : but to be serious with you, Pauline, were I to wish you to receive a new religion, merely on hearsay, I should be no better than the rulers of that false system from which you have escaped. I do not pretend to tell you that the reformed churches are perfect—far from it—they are very defective, inasmuch as their rulers and members are sinful men : but this, at least, they have—that they do not deny the Holy Scriptures to their people—they do not seal up the fountain of living waters : but rather invite their members to come and drink. There is no mystery, at least no systematic mystery, in their dealings ; all with them is open ; though, I fear, not always correct and fair. Nevertheless, under these visible churches, the true believer may act and think for himself—study his bible—shape his conduct according to its precepts, and have little else to fear than such scoffs and jeers as wicked men, of every denomination, have a delight in throwing upon the professors of religion.”

I have not described William d’Ivannois. He was

a fine young man, though not possessing a high degree of polish. His general manner was lively, and even playful. I was therefore the more astonished and pleased at the serious manner in which he pressed upon us, not merely his own mode of thinking, but a calm and deep inquiry into truth, by a regular study of scripture, casting aside all reference to the traditions and commandments of men ; alleging, that at best these must be very uncertain guides, inasmuch as men's passions may dictate any thing which they judged to be advantageous to themselves, or likely to promote their own interests.

We granted all this : but alleged, " that although man might err, we had been taught to think the church infallible and incapable of error."

" What is the church ?" asked William, " for assuredly our controversy turns on this inquiry."

" I see that it does so : " replied Pauline, " and I remember that this was the precise point upon which the argument between Clarice and the bishop rested : namely, What is the church ?"

" There is a distinction," said William, " made in the Holy Scriptures, between *the* church and *a* church. Every established form of worship, professing the name of Christian, throughout the world, whether faithful or corrupt, may be called *a* church—of such there are multitudes ; and these together form what we call the universal visible church, of which the character is imperfection, inasmuch as its members are mixed, the evil with the good, the professor with the true believer. But within this visible church, within this outer court, which I fear is but too often little better than a den of thieves, is

contained, as far as we are permitted to see, all those members of the invisible church, as at any given period are passing through time to eternity, and which can be no otherwise manifested to their fellow creatures, but by their transit through the visible church. These members of the invisible church, under the present dispensation, which is spiritual, are in such condition, having no visible head, that they cannot be numbered; neither are they known, having no external beauty or perfection. Neither have they any authority in the congregation of men; for they know that this is not their home, nor the period of the reign of their Master, Christ: but they look forward to the glorious moment of the return of their Lord—when they shall be as the stones of his crown, and as the rows of jewels which adorn his cheeks. For,” added our young and enlightened teacher, all sparkling with animation, “the promises to the universal church above are rich and magnificent, beyond all which the natural man can conceive, and are made evident by every beautiful figure which the natural world can supply. Such as glorious human beauty, health, renown, purity, incorruptibility, gorgeous apparel, perfumes, precious stones, magnificent scenes, exquisite fruits, groves of spice, crowns and sceptres, and thrones, running brooks, cloudless skies, and eternal light and life: and in short all that is lovely, all that is desirable, all that is pure and perfect. But ambitious men (such are and ever have been the rulers of the Roman Catholic church) in order to establish their own rule, have appropriated to their own ecclesiastical hierarchy all the pro-

mises which belong to the church triumphant when manifested, as it shall be, in glory and dominion in the latter days ; namely, at the period of the return of the Lord ; and they have employed all the natural emblems which are prepared by the Omnipotent Creator, from the beginning of time, for the exhibition of spiritual truths, and thus used by the inspired writers,—to adorn their pageantries and confirm their power. And they have done this so well that they have deceived thousands and tens of thousands ; though I trust that within their tents and courts and gardens of imagery, there have been many of the hidden ones of our Lord. For we cannot believe that all are lost to God, who, during the long ages of past darkness, were counted among the members of the Roman Catholic Church.”

There was much in all this to render us very thoughtful ; but nothing touched us more than the hope held out to us, that all our former companions, and those who had walked before them in the way of error, were not lost. This expression of William brought us to tears. We wept abundantly, and our hearts were relieved by these tears. The young man was evidently affected also, for he instantly changed the discourse, and resumed, without an effort, his usual airiness of manner.

How lovely was the gradual approach of evening ! The stillness of the air, the balmy fragrance of the breeze, and the advance of the shadows up the sides of the mountains, and the golden line of declining day retreating before them, till at length the snowy heights, seen at a distance, assumed that pale cold

hue which every lover of natural phenomena must have observed on the superior heights in mountainous countries, a few moments before the veil of night renders all things indistinct, unless it may be the bare outline of the hills upon the clear expanse of the heavens. Then followed a glorious night. The moon arose, her horn being nearly filled, and having cleared herself of the mountain above which she first appeared, we observed her image on the water, with a long ray of her soft light, forming a line across the lake.

“Oh, that moon!” said Pauline, “on what a scene did it shed its light last night! What would I give to know what is now passing at St Siffren! Poor Mere Genefride! where is she now? Where is la Mere Aymee and the sisters? Oh, Angelique! Happy in comparison with them, are those that sleep in the dust.”

“That is,” said William, “if they have been deceived, and not been themselves deceivers. In the latter case, I would not willingly exchange with the dead.”

It was eleven by the night when we arrived at the little village where we were to land. There was a small custom-house by the edge of the lake, where William was well known, and near to this a little inn, to which he brought us. Here he found two servants of his father, with a sort of carriage used for the mountains, drawn by four mules. Within this he placed us, and recommending us to the care of the servants, he took his leave, meaning to repass the lake that very night, in order to join the party

which he had left behind. We knew not how to thank him for all his kindness ; but the tears which we could not repress, when we expressed our hope that all who had set out together from St Siffren might soon meet in perfect safety, were more to him than any words we could have used. The place of our destination was what our old driver called "an hour from the lake," and the road, he informed us, was as safe and smooth as the palm of a lady's hand.

Pauline smiled at the comparison, and said, that ladies' hands were sometimes treacherous—not so, she hoped, the road. However, we found no great difficulties, although when about a third of our way, we entered such a gorge as I could hardly have conceived. It gaped upon us like the mouth of some horrid monster ; and, although we were continually ascending, we seemed every moment to be more deeply involved in darkness. We could not ascertain by the eye the height of the rocks on either side of us, though we could discern the outline made by their jagged summits on the sky. We were also aware that there was a torrent on one side of us, by the dashing sound which it made ; and we passed two or three cascades, the white foam of which showed distinctly amid the mass of dark foliage which shaded the place of their fall. At length the gorge opened, and we entered a valley of a circular form, covered with an uncommonly fine green sward, having neither hedges nor fences, and being scattered with cottages—all of that singularly beautiful description denominated "Suisse."

CHAPTER IX.

THE REFUGE.

HAVING passed several of these, our driver pointed out to us, with no small glee, his master's house, standing high on the bank, and being of dimensions and proportions vastly superior to those we had already seen. Near it were many barns and out-houses, indicating the prosperous farmer, and huge stacks of wood, neatly arranged for winter fuel. Instead of one gallery of carved wood, as we had seen in the cottages we had passed, there were two around this house, the highest being near the overhanging roof; and whereas, in most countries, the gable ends of a house are on each side, in this mansion they were to the back and front. A long line of small casement windows opened on each gallery, the lights shining from within as if many of the panes of glass were coloured; the panes in the higher story were circular or octagon, fitting curiously into each other; and on a beam over the lower range of windows was a motto written in German, and in letters of gold. The whole of the house was composed of timber, which was quite bright and polished, and of the hue of oak. Behind the house was a garden encompassed with palisades.

It is not to be supposed that I observed all these

particulars on my first approach, and by moonlight, though I mention them in this place in order to help the imagination of my reader to accompany me as I go. It was a steep pull for the mules to bring us up from the road to the front of the house. Nor was the noise of our approach lost upon the inmates; for they had been already warned of our speedy arrival by a peasant who had gone forward from the cottage where we had laid aside our nuns' habits during the night. The carriage, therefore, had scarcely stopped, before a most venerable pair appeared in the front of the house, ready to receive us to their arms and hearts, not making any apparent difference between Pauline and me. There was a momentary demur at the non-appearance of William, which was speedily explained by the servant, who said, that his young master gave his love to his mother, and hoped to be with her by the next day. There was nothing then to be done but to take us into the house.

We ascended to the first floor by means of the stairs without, and were introduced into a sort of apartment, which I could not easily designate. It was floored and wainscoted with oak much embrowned by time. It had a sort of tent-like bed, in an alcove at one end, and a long board for dining, with benches, at the other. There was a stove in the apartment, covered with Dutch tiles, whereon several dishes were set to be kept warm for our supper, and, in a corner of the room, a most superb clock, in a very high case. All this I saw with one glance, regarding these objects as signs of comfort and opulence; for it would have been excessively

painful for me to have come, under the circumstances I then was, into any place where I thought that my maintenance might be an inconvenience.

But the excellent lady was herself taking the dishes from the stove, and setting them on the table for us.

"You must be hungry, dear young ladies," she said ;—"sup, my children, and then to rest. We have been hoping you might come, for several days; but one of the boys came forward this morning, to tell us you were on the road."

From this young man it seems that she had heard the particulars of our escape from St Siffren, with the extraordinary account of the recaptured sister. Being thus kindly invited, we ate a little, but were so overpowered with sleep, that we could give no account of ourselves. However the good old gentleman would not let his wife take us away, till we had knelt together, and united in a prayer of thankfulness for our deliverance; but the prayer was short, and soon after it was concluded, we were both in a deep sleep, in a delightful upper room where were two beds. About four in the morning, I was awakened, for an instant, by a noise, as I thought, under the window. I started up in bed for a moment, but the sweet conviction that I was in a place of safety coming to my mind, I lay down and slept again; nor did I awake a second time, till the rays of the mid-day sun were beaming through the curtains.

Madame d'Ivannois was standing by my bed when I opened my eyes, and she had brought with her changes of apparel for us both.

“My love,” she said, addressing me with a smiling countenance, “it is late ; give God thanks for your long repose. You look another thing than when you arrived last night ;” and then smiling, she added, “here is company come, and desiring to see you, my daughters ;—good friends who are anxious for your welfare.”

“What !” exclaimed Pauline and I, in one breath, “are our friends arrived, and our poor sister with them ? Are they all safe, all well ?”

In reply, she informed us that they had all appeared early in the morning, and that they had brought with them a doctor from the small town on the edge of the lake ; that the rest of the party were quite well ; but that the poor lady had been so exhausted, that, from the time she had been laid on the litter, she had never spoken distinctly, or given any account of herself ; that she had been placed in bed the moment she arrived, and was so low, that they had feared for a short time she could not have been brought about. “Nevertheless,” she added, “our last reports from her room are very cheering ; our good doctor tells us that her pulse is amended, and that she has slept calmly for the last hour.”

“May I see her ?” asked Pauline, hastening to dress herself.

“No,” replied Madame d’Ivannois, “she must not be disturbed on any account. And her room is nearly dark ; she seems to be so wonderfully oppressed with light, that we all believe that she has long been confined in total obscurity : we have therefore shaded her room.”

“What is she like?” we asked, “is she young or old?”

“Poor creature!” replied Madame, “I cannot say that I could tell you; I was too busy to get her into bed, to look much at her face; but assuredly she is not an old woman.”

“If it is Agnace,” said Pauline, “she has been confined at least thirty years, and must be near fifty.”

Madame d’Ivannois shuddered, and replied, “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Poor creature! think what she must have suffered. Thirty years, did you say? The Lord help her! But I trust that her sorrows are now at an end. She has fought the good fight; and he who is with her has proved himself stronger than he who is against her.”

“How do you know, Madame d’Ivannois,” said Pauline, “that she has fought a good fight? Do you know the cause of her long confinement?”

“I can guess it,” replied Madame d’Ivannois, “without possessing much more discernment than another. For this morning, when I, with a kind neighbour who had run over to offer her services as a nurse, undressed the poor creature, to put her in bed, what did we find concealed about her person, in a most curious sort, but a very small bible—well worn, I promise you. It was pitiable to see it bound upon her poor leg. She was quite insensible when we took it off, but I put it by her in the bed: and I know not whether she is even now conscious that she has it. Ah! my children, this poor suffering one, whom you have been the means, under God, of

bringing into a place of safety, is one beloved of God, there can be no question."

We were very anxious to be permitted to see her, being full of amazement to think how she possibly could have procured a bible in the convent, but Madame d'Ivannois was resolved that there should be no chance of disturbing or exciting her; and as soon as we were dressed, she brought us down into the room where we had supped. There we found the venerable father of the family, with his son, and the noble and admirable youth who, with the divine permission, had been the means of my deliverance. I had never seen his face before, and I was instantly struck, and strongly affected, by his likeness to the beautiful and unfortunate Clarice. Indeed, I was so much affected by this circumstance, that when I advanced to thank him for all that he had done for me, I burst into tears. I never before had been so strangely affected. I had not dared to offer him my hand, but he took it; and seeing that I trembled violently, he seated me in a chair; and taking one near to me, "Dear lady," he said, "if I have been the happy means of rescuing you from temporal evils (but what are these light afflictions which endure but for a moment, in comparison with the evils of an eternal and inscrutable state of existence for eternity), oh! that I might also be the happy means, unworthy as I am, of rescuing you from the deadly spiritual thralldom in which you have hitherto been held. Will you, lady, for my sake"—and he blushed as he spoke, and caught himself up—"for the sake of Him to whom every knee should bow, accept this

precious volume?" And he placed a small silver-clasped bible in my hand. "And will you study it, asking the illumination of the Lord the Spirit, and resolving, with the divine help, to receive all that is therein taught, and to reject all objects of faith devised by man?"

He had placed the book in my hand. I had long desired to possess a bible, and he seemed entirely satisfied with the manner in which I received it, for he arose, and turned away from me with such a glow of holy joy on his countenance, as no sense of imaginary merit could ever have imparted even to the finest features. M. d'Ivannois was summoning us to join with him in his morning devotions. I had shrunk from the place given me by Mr Beaumont, to the side of Pauline. Nor could we help contrasting the beautiful simplicity of this service with the dull, monotonous, and excruciating wearisomeness of our morning services at St Siffren. Neither can you, my gentle reader, who have been in the habit of hearing the scriptures read from infancy, conceive the effect of this first reading of the bible in my ears. It was the first chapter of St Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, which had been selected on this occasion; nor can I describe the manner in which the truths there exhibited seized upon my mind. The doctrines of election and adoption by grace were so entirely new to me; so consoling, so delightful, that I felt I must have misunderstood the sacred text, and that it was wholly impossible that any individual of the corrupt race of Adam could have been chosen before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without

blame before the Father in love, being predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. All this, as I before said, was too delightful, too consoling ; and yet every word that M. d'vannois had read was in my bible, and I might recur to it whenever I wished so to do.

It was a new and pleasing sight to me to see the happy family gathered round the long board, William being seated by Pauline, and myself by the venerable mother. Now happy people are often very unwise, especially after great and violent excitements. William laughed so heartily during the repast, that one would have thought he had never experienced an anxious moment. The old people were cheerful, and Pauline ready to laugh or cry, as occasion served ; indeed, she seemed scarcely able to subdue her feelings, so far as to retain a convenient composure of manner, whilst Mr Beaumont seemed, from time to time, to be entirely abstracted and occupied with painful reflections. It afterwards appeared that he was thinking of his sister, for we had hardly breakfasted before he requested a private interview with me and Pauline, in which he made us relate to him every thing we knew of his dear sister. It was an intense interest with which he listened. We had retired to a small arbour in the walled garden behind the house. He sate during the recital with his hand shading his eyes—men do not like to be seen to weep—but his breast heaved convulsively, as Pauline related, with much pathos, the scene in the subter-

aneous chapel; and the account of his sister's death seemed to affect him equally.

When we had told all we knew, he started from his seat, and taking one of each of our hands, he pressed them to his lips, saying, "It is all too little that ever I could do for you, excellent young ladies. May God bless you for your kindness to my poor, my lovely Emily! I will see you a few hours hence; I am not now fit for company;" and he hastened from us, passing through the garden door towards the mountains.

When we returned to the house, we found Madame d'Ivannois in the offices, attending to her household affairs. She informed us that the surgeon had just left the house, promising to return in the evening. We were anxious to know how he left our poor sister, and were rejoiced to hear that he had the best hopes for her; that she had frequent short sleeps; that she took nourishment, and was recruiting rapidly; but that she still spoke wildly, and gave no account of herself that could be made any thing of, only that when she found her bible, she seemed agitated, and attempted to hide it, being in excessive trouble, till those present informed her, with much presence of mind, that every body had a bible in that house, and that she had no need to be ashamed of hers. Thank God! she answered, and soon fell asleep. Pauline and I wept on hearing this anecdote, and begged to be permitted to see her; we were, however, put off till the next day. To this day, therefore, I must hasten, only remarking that Mr Beaumont joined us at supper, having entirely re-

covered his composure ; and why should he not, inasmuch as his heart was filled with love and gratitude on account of the noble steadfastness of his departed sister. We had a most interesting conversation, in which the true doctrines of scripture were exhibited to us in the most clear and beautiful forms. Pauline and I did not, at that time, actually confess ourselves convinced, but our opposition to the truths pressed upon us, became every instant more feeble ; and William drew upon himself a reproof from Pauline, because he asserted that she disputed only for fashion's sake, and was in her heart, at that moment, no more a Papist than he was. Thus passed our first happy day in the valleys of Switzerland—beautiful Switzerland !—how art thou associated in my mind with all that is precious to my heart, both as to time and to eternity !

The next morning, at breakfast, we were informed that our sister (as we called her, for want of another appellation), was so easy and composed, that if we would promise not to excite her, we should be permitted to see her. We were also informed that some light had been admitted, by her own desire, to her room ; and that she had borne it well, and even had enjoyed it. We accordingly went up as soon as we had breakfasted, Madame d'Ivannois having taken her place by the bed to keep us (as she said) in good order. Pauline entered first, stepping softly, and I followed. She advanced to the centre of the room, where she could see the sister lying, and raised by pillows in her bed. There she stood a moment, and then suddenly turning round, flew out of the room,

faintly crying, "Oh! merciful heaven! impossible! impossible!"

I had no other idea but to follow my friend, for I was thoroughly terrified by her manner; but her motions were so rapid that she had already ran round the gallery, and was descending the stairs on the other side of the house, before I caught sight of her again, though I followed her as swiftly as I could, and reached her at the instant that she sunk in a sort of swoon upon a bench, which was placed, according to the Swiss usage, in the front of the house. William approached to her at the same moment that I did, and was truly terrified to find that she was pale as death, and actually insensible. Seeing Mr Beaumont at a short distance, we called to him, and water was procured, with other restoratives; and used with such success, that Pauline opened her eyes in a few minutes, and began to speak, but so incoherently, that we could not make out what she would have said.

"Go, William, go," she at length exclaimed; "take your friend with you; leave me with Angelique, or my heart will burst; go, for heaven's sake, go; take Edward away, or I tell you I shall die;" and she looked so wildly, that we were all thoroughly terrified. At first the young men resisted her wish that she should be left with me, but at length giving way to our united entreaties, they walked to a small distance, and stood regarding us with strong anxiety from thence.

"Oh! Angelique," exclaimed Pauline, "it is—it is—and yet it cannot be."

“What is and cannot be ?” I asked.

“It is Clarice !—I am not mistaken,” she answered ; “it is indeed Clarice. Oh ! gracious heaven ! what accursed illusion has been put upon us ? is the grave to give up its dead ? Changed and altered, and wan and worn she is indeed ; but still that pale and beautiful sister who is there is Clarice. It is no other ; and her brother has saved her whilst he thought he was risking himself for a stranger. Indeed, indeed, I am not mistaken ;” for I was arguing with her on the impossibility of her assertion being well grounded : “you may go up—satisfy yourself,” she added ; “but it is unnecessary ; I am not mistaken ; only what shall we do for him ? Oh ! Angélique, when I opened my eyes, and saw him standing before me, all anxiety lest any ill should have befallen me,—a stranger, and to him a foreigner,—I felt that I dared not suddenly disclose the overpowering tidings, and hence my agitation. I verily thought that I should have been suffocated, for I did not venture to utter the word, lest joy should be more overpowering than grief, and thus our delight in this wonderful dispensation of a kind Providence should be converted into pain unspeakable : for oh ! Angélique, can one be insensible to the noble and exalted qualities of that brother of Clarice ; and can there be any thing more touching than the wonderful arrangement by which he has been made the instrument of rescuing his sister, whilst thinking only that he was assisting some unfortunate one, who had no other claim upon him than pure pity. But how are we to break these blessed tidings to him ?” and she

looked me earnestly in the face, as if I could have solved her doubts. Whilst we were still speaking I heard my own name and that of Pauline repeated from the gallery above. Madame d'Ivannois was calling us, and Pauline requested me to obey the call, whilst she endeavoured to prepare our friend for the surprising intelligence which awaited him. I was aware that Pauline had more presence of mind than I had; indeed she had given an example of this whilst reviving from her fainting. I was, therefore, glad to leave her to herself, and was anxious to see Clarice, still almost dreading that my friend might possibly have deceived herself by an imaginary resemblance.

I accordingly hastened up the stairs, and meeting Madame d'Ivannois, she informed me that my afflicted friend was impatient to see me. She was adding more, when I ran by her, all impatience; yet was enabled to command myself when I entered the room, although my heart beat so violently as almost to deprive me of breath. The room was partially darkened: but there was quite sufficient light to afford me the assurance that Pauline had not been mistaken. It was indeed no other than Clarice whom I beheld, lying there on that pillow. Changed indeed she was, and fearfully so, since I had last seen her, being entirely without colour, and having lost much of that calm steadfastness of expression which had rendered her appearance in the subterraneous sanctuary something more than earthly. But the high excitement and demand for fortitude of those scenes were passed away, and succeeding horrors, as

I afterwards found, had tended much to disturb her mind. This change in her appearance immediately struck me, and made me hesitate to advance: but my hesitation was serviceable, in giving her time to recollect me; for it must be observed that my features were not so well known to her as those of Pauline. My dress also being changed, probably made some difference; for it was apparent that she did not recognize me at once: but by degrees, as she recovered her recollection of me, a lovely smile, together with a sweet suffusion of a delicate roseate hue began to illuminate her hitherto pale and almost marble features; and extending her arms, she tried to raise herself, saying, "Angelique, sweet sister Angelique."

I instantly sprang forward, clasped her to my breast, and the next moment had sunk on my knees near to her pillow.

It was then, for the first time, as I afterwards learnt, that Clarice had been able to shed tears for many weeks: but she did weep copiously at that moment, and probably would have experienced extreme relief to her head from these tears, had I not imprudently, soon afterwards, when I saw her more composed, thrown her mind back into a state of confusion, by asking her what I was to think of her supposed death and obsequies.

I perceived immediately that her manner became unsettled on my making this inquiry. She put her hand to her head and replied, "Then it was not a vision—not a dream; but a reality—a frightful reality. Then I did die—they told me so—and they showed

me the funeral procession. I saw it, Angelique, from the window of that cell—I saw it all, and heard the funeral hymn—and you heard it too. It could not then have been a dream ;” and she looked wildly upon me, and thus continued, “ then, perhaps, all those things are not dreams, but realities. How can we know what is a vision, and what is truth ?”

I trembled beneath her earnest gaze, as she put this question to me : but answered, I think, with some presence of mind. “ Clarice, it appears to me that we have all lived hitherto in a sort of dream ; our superiors have endeavoured to keep us from knowing and understanding the truth, until we are brought into such a state that we cannot judge and discern what is false from what is real : but our heavenly Father has now, in his infinite mercy, brought us into a place of safety, and in this sweet resting place our minds, with the divine blessing, will gradually recover from the shocks which they have received.”

“ God is love, sister Angelique,” she replied.

“ Yes :” I said, “ and what present proof of his love can we have greater than this, that he should have provided a friend to deliver us and bring us here.”

“ Yes,” she said, “ a friend ! Who is that friend ?”

I was afraid to tell her the whole truth : but I ventured to say, “ a kind and excellent young gentleman, who pitied us because we were captives.”

“ Tell him, sister Angelique, that I have prayed to God to bless and reward him : I can do no more to show my gratitude. But tell me,” she added, growing wild again, “ is Clarice dead ?”

“ Yes :” I ventured to say, “ we have done with

sister Clarice ; that name is cancelled. You are now Emily Beaumont."

"Emily Beaumont!" she repeated, "then where is Edward? Did he send me a letter? or was that too a dream?"

"Should you know your brother," I asked, "were you to see him?"

She put her hand to her head again, which admonished me to break off the discourse as soon as possible, and then resumed, though more as if talking to herself than answering my question. "Edward Beaumont—what is he?—what was he?—a fair little boy—they lifted Emily up the side of the ship, and Edward stood below. Ah! Edward, that time is past—it never can return. Did they say a thousand years;"—and looking wildly at me, and seizing my hand, "sister," she said, "make haste, do not be seen with me; Madame is coming, and they will say that I am corrupting you."

Madame d'Ivannois, who had followed me into the room, now motioned me to withdraw. "The sight of you," she said, as she drew me to the door, "is so connected with past sufferings, that I must forbid these interviews at present: go, my child, leave the poor young creature to my care: all will be right by and by. God only knows what she may have endured. A little longer, and her intellects might have been irrecoverably destroyed."

I acquiesced in all which the worthy lady said: but still clinging to her and drawing her from the door into the gallery, I suddenly threw my arms round her neck and exclaimed, "Dear, dear Madame

d'Ivannois, are you still ignorant of our extreme joy. Do you not yet know that in this poor sister, we have found our Clarice. Mr Beaumont has been the means of saving his sister, his own Emily." She was almost as strongly affected on hearing this as Pauline had been in discovering it first, and hastening down with me into the public room of the family, we there found Edward (by which name I shall now designate the brother of Clarice), Pauline, and William. Poor Edward, who could have thought of any one but him at that moment. I never saw any one so thoroughly overpowered by joy and gratitude. He was at one moment weeping like an infant, and then again breaking out in expressions of praise and thanksgiving; then indulging in conjectures how all these things could have been; and then again thanking us, to whom little thanks were due, for the assistance we had been able to give, in the relief of his dear sister. But I despair of describing this scene. Indeed, I was not myself for many hours afterwards; nor do I think that any thing like composure was restored to the family till after M. d'Ivannois had collected us to a solemn act of thanksgiving, immediately before the evening meal.

It seems that my interview with Clarice had not, upon the whole, promoted her health. It was therefore agreed that we should not see her again till the Monday morning, and she was to enjoy perfect quiet during the whole of the next day, which was Sunday. That Sunday, namely, the first Sunday I ever spent in a Protestant family, can never be forgotten by me. Neither, indeed, ought it to be; for it was,

I have reason to think, especially blessed to my soul. We accompanied the family to the little village church, and were present at the simple service ; we had attended the family worship in the morning, and in the afternoon we had a quiet walk among the valleys,—enjoying much sweet discourse respecting the love of the Father, the freeness of the redemption procured by the Son, and that wonderful process of regeneration through the Lord the Spirit, by which that image of God is renewed which was lost through the disobedience of Adam, and man again united to his Creator, and readmitted to all the privileges of a son of God. These marvellous and delightful truths afforded the chief subjects of our discourse, or rather these were the truths which Edward and William endeavoured to impress on mine and Pauline's mind ; whilst the excellent Monsieur d'Ivannois, who bore us company in our walk, failed not to add to what was advanced by our young instructors, from the deep treasures of his own Christian experience.

In the evening of that same happy day, a letter arrived from Madame Verani,—my dear Madame Verani,—giving us hopes of a speedy visit. I answered this letter the next morning, saying, how glad Madame d'Ivannois would be to see her, her husband, and little boy, and empowering Monsieur Verani to take up what remained of my property, if possible, and transmit it to a banker in Geneva, recommended by M. d'Ivannois ; for I had already begun to consider that I must not always live at the expense of others. What had been paid into the funds of Notre Dame de Misericorde was gone, I

knew, for ever: but this concerned me little; all I cared for was, that it might please God that as much of my patrimony might remain as would keep me in independence, however humble. As to the rest, I thank God that at that time I had no uneasiness as it regarded earthly things; but I was in much agitation respecting religion, and the vows which I had taken; and Pauline's mind was even more agitated than mine, inasmuch as it was already evident that William was anxious that she should become his companion for life. There was certainly very much in the character, appearance, situation, and connexions of this young man, which removed every other obstacle to their union but that of religion, and especially the vow which she had so solemnly made of remaining unmarried through life. The question with her was, if I am led to see the false pretensions of the Roman Catholic church, am I still bound by the oaths which it has required of me? This was a question which I could not answer; and as we had no one whom we thought it prudent to consult, we were led, I trust, to earnest prayer for direction: although it was some time before our prayers were so far answered, as that our minds were entirely set at rest.

But before I enter into the account of my second interview with dear Clarice, I should say, that on the Monday morning one of the young peasants who had accompanied our friends to St Siffren, and had remained behind, I forget on what account, arrived at M. d'Ivannois, and gave us an account of many things we desired to know.

He informed us that the fire, which had broken out where I had apprehended, had burnt many of the out-houses, and had raged furiously when it reached the pile of wood for winter fuel, but had not destroyed the main building, although that had suffered cruelly from the mob, by whom it was entirely despoiled, the images and pictures defaced, the cornices torn down, the pavements uprooted, and, in short, the whole building left but an empty shell. As to the Superieure and the sisters, he could tell us little of them. He had heard them shriek, and seen them run from one part of the building to another; but he believed that they had all escaped in various directions, with the exception of one, whose remains had been found in the cemetiere, on the morning following the calamity. "The body lay," said the young man, "at the foot of the cross, in the centre of the graves, and was that of an exceedingly old woman."

"Ah!" we exclaimed, "the poor Mere Aymee: she was perhaps the happiest of the whole household;" and we could not restrain our tears, in thinking of the calamities to which the rest of the sisters might even then be exposed.

But Madame d'Ivannois had promised us that we should see Clarice this day, and she assured us also that we should find her greatly amended, the rest which she had enjoyed having greatly restored her health, and the pure and perfect principles which had supported her through many scenes, such as I trembled to think of, not having been inefficient in restoring that composure of mind for which she had before been so remarkable. But perhaps I am now

expressing myself too much after the manner of the world, and attributing to causes such as we can comprehend, those effects which were produced by the direct influences of the Lord the Spirit. For although I cannot agree with those excellent persons who, in the present day, have admitted the idea that palpable and visible miracles may yet be expected in the church under the existing dispensation, an expectation for which I have never yet been able to discover any grounds in scripture; yet I think there is no question but that the indwelling operations of the Holy Spirit in the chosen of the Father are at this time almost altogether overlooked, and his healing, strengthening, and life-giving influences too often attributed to the ministry of man, or other visible second causes: but I must leave these reflections, not knowing whither they might carry me.

My next interview with Clarice, during which Pauline was present, was far more tranquil than my first had been; still, however, we feared to make her brother known to her, though his anxiety for the meeting was such, that Madame d'Ivannois could not find arguments to protract it longer than the next Sunday, at which time she proposed to introduce him as one of her family.

Clarice was to be taken up after breakfast; and when Madame d'Ivannois, who had great delight in attending upon her, had dressed her and arranged her in the neatest order, she led her into the gallery, and there set her in an easy chair, in view of the mountains, seen across a valley, such as few countries on earth besides Switzerland can show. Being

thus seated, Madame d'Ivannois proposed to introduce her friends to her, and we, that is, William and Edward, Pauline and I, were brought up. We had been entreated to be calm, and the sweet composure of the lovely sister, now much recovered, and beautiful even in that reduced and feeble state, was a perpetual admonition to us to command ourselves. Accordingly, when Pauline had embraced her, we all sat down around her; whilst Madame d'Ivannois endeavoured to lead the conversation to ordinary subjects.

Clarice replied to her remarks with deference and politeness; but presently recurred to those things which were uppermost in her mind, and, addressing her brother, on whom she had been looking intently for some moments. "It is one of my first duties, sir," she said, "as it is a particular pleasure to me, to express my sense of what I owe to you. You have been the means, under Almighty God, of saving me from horrors of which I dare not now even think, and in a manner so extraordinary, that I can look upon the circumstance by which I was thrown into your hands only as an immediate interference of divine Providence."

Edward was evidently unable to answer her; for his eyes filled with tears, and he seemed to use a strong effort, as he stood leaning against the inner wall of the gallery, to prevent himself from rushing forward, and catching his dear and long lost sister in his arms. Clarice, I saw, gazed steadily upon him in the meantime, and the colour rose in her

cheeks. Madame d'Ivannois was about to speak, with a view to divert the attention of the sister from the brother, fearing a too sudden discovery of their mutual relationship; when Clarice interrupted, or rather prevented her, by saying, with a startling earnestness, "That young gentleman is your son, Madame, is it not so?"

"The son of my affections, my love," returned Madame d'Ivannois.

"I thought," replied Clarice, "that once I heard—but perhaps it was a dream—when I was in that litter, that they called him Edward. But I have had many dreams, and I have also experienced many dream-like realities. Indeed I have been trying for some days past to separate the real events of my life from those which are illusions. It cannot be," she added, and she rubbed her hand across her eyes, "that I am dreaming now; and that all this pleasant vision will pass away, as others of a very different nature have done; that would indeed be a refinement of cruelty." And she looked again towards her brother, a beautiful glow at the same time mantling in her cheeks, and said, "Kind sir, you will pardon me; but I am confused, troubled, uneasy. I have strange thoughts—you should not look so steadfastly at me;" and she turned to Madame d'Ivannois, saying, "Might he sit down by me? I fear that he will pass away, as other things have done. Surely he does not mean to deceive me."

It was evident now that the confusion of ideas, under which she had laboured some days past, was returning, attended with that which always accom-

panied it, namely a sense of dread; and it was, therefore, necessary to manage her with great caution.

“Dear lady!” said Mr Beaumont, as he obeyed her summons, and placed himself by her, though without daring to trust his voice any further.

“May I touch your hand?” said Clarice. He gave her his hand; she laid it between her own for a moment, and then letting it go, she added, “No, it is not a phantom! Not such as I have seen, or dreamed I saw—I know not which. But, dear Pauline,” she added, “you may understand these things better than I do; did you not attend my obsequies?”

“I did attend that ceremony,” replied Pauline, “which was supposed to be your obsequies. But all that may be explained—we shall understand it very soon; so think no more of it at present.”

“I will not,” she replied. “But tell me, Pauline, who is this? Am I mistaken? Can it possibly be that he is only deceiving me; and that he will pass away like those dim images of horror, in that terrible place! Oh, Pauline, Pauline!” she added, throwing her arms around her, and clinging closely to her, with a sort of convulsive grasp, “save me—save me from my own imaginations! They are terrible.”

“No, no,” said Pauline, “he will not pass away. Look at him—his eyes are full of tears! And see with what love he regards you.”

“I love him too,” she answered; “he has been the means of saving me from a very horrible fate. But, Pauline, why do I remember him, and not remember him?”

“Because,” replied Pauline, “you perhaps knew

him when he was a child, and have not seen him since."

"He is not Edward," she exclaimed, drawing back from Pauline; "not my own Edward—my own dear brother? No, that cannot be"—And I never shall forget the ardent earnest look which she fixed upon him for one moment; but this fixed gaze of suspense endured only for that moment, for the next she was caught in the arms of her brother, and had sunk almost lifeless on his breast. We would have administered restoratives as soon as we could recover ourselves sufficiently to think of them; but the gentle soothings of the faithful brother had more effect in restoring sweet Clarice to herself, than any cordial which we could have used; and I do not hesitate to say, that this last exhibition of the divine love towards her, in restoring her to the arms of her brother, had more effect in rendering back her strength and firmness of mind, than all else beside which we could have done?

One of the most cruel principles of the Roman Catholic religion is that of requiring the sacrifice of all natural ties. It is certain, as our Saviour himself says, that religion frequently causes divisions in families. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matt. x. 34. Yet how does it contribute to these divisions? Not by any means through the abandonment of these natural ties by the child of God; but by the forcible ejectment of the believer from his unbelieving family, by which he is no longer permitted to partake of any social intercourse with those to

whom he is attached by natural affinity. But the motto of the Papist is, "Stand by, I am holier than thou;" and under this principle, he insists that every sentiment of natural affection shall be sacrificed, when the church commands it to be so.

And now the full tide of the long repressed natural affections of Clarice seemed to flow towards her noble, her pious, her magnanimous brother. Not that she was cold or thankless to the rest of her friends. No, she was, on the contrary, all that was kind, grateful, tender, and, inasmuch, as she continually referred every present enjoyment to the infinite bounty of her heavenly Father, it was not long before her mind recovered all its peace; and as her health was rapidly restored, under the divine blessing on the care of Madame d'Ivannois, we soon had the pleasure to see her restored to a degree of bloom and beauty, such as we had only known as attributed to her by report. It was much in her favour that she was still so young, being little more than twenty-one years of age when she was taken from St Siffren. Nevertheless, had not her constitution been naturally uncommonly good, she could not have recovered so entirely as she did; insomuch so, that after a year or two every trace of suffering had passed away from her delicate frame.

It was not, however, till some weeks after the scene related above, that she was permitted to give us the detail of what shall be related in the following pages.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIALS OF CLARICE.

“I WILL not enter, my beloved friends,” said Clarice, “on the transactions of the early part of my residence in the convent of Notre Dame de Misericorde; during which period I had experienced the common fate of favourites, having been at one time high in the favour of the Superieure, and at another regarded with extreme coldness. I had early lost the affections of poor Annunciata, indeed so early, and so immediately after I had taken the veil, that I was almost led to doubt whether I had ever possessed them; especially when that apparent affection suddenly turned into determined hatred, through a suspicion of my having betrayed the unhappy sister, in the affair of a few words from a friend being conveyed to her in a dried sweetmeat, with which circumstance I became acquainted through accident. The little transaction had been discovered by la Mere Ursule, and by her revealed to Madame. It was in itself an affair which would soon have been overlooked, could the unhappy sister have forgotten the aspersion which it had thrown upon her character, hitherto supposed to have been irreproachable.

“What the state of my mind as it regarded religion might have been, from the time of my profess-

ion till within the last twelve months, when the change took place of which I shall presently speak, I can hardly say. I think I may assert that my prevailing feeling was that of tedium and languor, and an increasing disgust at the various forms to which we were obliged to submit. Still I did not as yet entertain any doubts respecting the validity of these forms. I did not question but that all which the church exacted and taught was perfectly correct, and that all I could do would be only too little to save me from the horrors of purgatory, if not from everlasting destruction.

“In the mean time, I was an especial favourite with Father Joachim and la Mere Ursule; and it was in consequence of their opinion of me, that when Madame Barthelemis became a pensionaire in the convent, and held out hopes that she would cast her lot with us, and not only pay what was required for herself, but also endow several more persons from her ample possessions, I was employed to attend to her, under the superintendance of la Mere Assistante. And when she was confined to her bed by a very severe attack of rheumatism, I was often left with her for hours together, with the strongest injunctions that I should do all that in me lay to promote the interests of holy Mother Church. Nor had I any other thought but to do what was required of me, till a circumstance occurred which overturned all my plans and intentions.

“Madame Barthelemis was of a description of persons with whom I had never before happened to meet, and one which I did not then understand. She

was a widow of a certain age, and one who had not given up all ideas of personal beauty. She was a woman of no natural strength of mind, and was in consequence liable to receive strong impressions, which were, however, easily effaced. She had been wonderfully taken with the pantomime and scenery of monastic life, when she first came to us; and had not the rheumatism intervened, she probably might have taken the white veil before this fit of enthusiasm had passed away. But this illness had the effect of wearying her with the dull and unnatural monotony of our lives; in consequence of which, she would no longer hearken to my arguments in favour of a cloistered life, but rather chose to entertain me with accounts of what she had herself seen in the gay world. One evening she produced a very small book, beautifully bound and gilt, saying, with a smile, that this volume had been the gift of a dear friend, who had required a promise from her that she would read it through before she took the irrevocable vows. "But, alas! sister Clarice," she added, "it is very long; and I know not that I ever read so much as it contains in all the course of my life."

"I was anxious to see the interior of this volume, and requested her to give it into my hand. She smiled and said, "No, Clarice, you must not read this book; it is an interdicted volume; its tendency is all contrary to Mother Church and her ceremonies, at least, so my friend would have me believe. For my part, I must take things for granted, for I cannot read all this;" and she closed the book, and threw it carelessly on the bed. Neither can it be doubted

that I, who suspected that this was the bible (a volume which I had never seen since I had left England), instantly took it up, and began to examine it with avidity.

“ Oh ! dear Madame Barthelemis,” I said, “ give me this book ; if you love me, give it me ;” and I pleaded so vehemently that she consented, adding, with a strange light heartedness, “ If this volume brings you into the inquisition, Clarice, don’t blame me.”

“ I mentioned to the bishop in the subterranean chapel, when you, my sisters Pauline and Angelique, as you have informed me, were present, what was the first passage in the sacred volume which opened my eyes, namely, that which was falsely quoted and placed as a motto under the image of the Virgin. My eyes, as I say, were forcibly opened by the change of the word in this quotation, and I, by the divine influence, from that moment began as it were to “ see men as trees walking.” My attendance on Madame Barthelemis afforded me much opportunity of reading ; neither did I waste these precious moments. I read incessantly, not heeding the giddy mirth of my companion, who was vastly amused at the eagerness with which, as she was pleased to say, I sucked in the notions which would, sooner or later, make me a brand for the auto-de-fe : indeed I was well assured that self-love would prevent her from confessing the part she had had in placing this dangerous book in my hands ; for would not every one have said,—the sister Clarice could not have read this interdicted volume, if Madame Barthelemis had not surreptitiously introduced it into the house.

“It would take far too much time to describe how this sacred book worked upon my mind, and how I was led to reject one Popish error after another, till in a short time, an inconceivably short time (for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow), I was a Protestant in heart, though still, alas! a veiled and cloistered nun. Whilst Madame Barthelemis remained with us, I was permitted to be so much in her room that I escaped all remarks on my conduct, which already, no doubt, had begun to be affected by the alteration of my principles; and immediately on her departure I had a slight illness, a kind of fever, which confined me to my cell, and which, no doubt, was in a degree occasioned by sorrow at parting with Madame Barthelemis (by which I lost the little liberty I had enjoyed), and apprehensions of the terrible contest which I anticipated.

“I take no credit whatever to myself for the change effected so suddenly in my mind by the reading of the scriptures. It seems to me, upon reflection, as if I had been, from first to last, a mere passive instrument in the Divine hands; and I think so the more from this circumstance, that I never was able, through all my distressing and terrible trials, to form any other plan of conduct than that of yielding to the suggestions, or inspirations (might I presume to say), of the moment itself; and it was astonishing how I was ever supplied with strength from one instant to another, my mind being protected and my courage upheld, until I was safe in the hands of real

Christians. Oh ! my God, how certain is the fulfilment of the promise, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matt. x. 19, 20.) But as I before said, I was confined for a short time to my cell by a fever, after Madame Barthelemis had left me, and the tears which I shed, together with the restraint so evident in my manner, were set down to the grief I felt in parting from my friend. That I should express so much sorrow in the separation from one who, after having resolved to take the vows, had returned to the world, was considered as a grievous sin, and la Mere Ursule assured me that it could not be repaired without certain penances, to which she trusted I should submit as soon as my health would permit me to leave my bed. What would the poor mother have felt or said, had she known that I actually at that time carried about me that sacred volume, which condemns all those forms and exercises so urgently commanded by her church. It was impossible, however, for me to affect illness much longer ; but it was, at the same time, impossible for me to submit to the forms required of me as a religieuse. That these forms are in many instances idolatrous in the highest degree must be acknowledged, for after all the metaphysical subtleties and refinements upon words used by the Roman Catholic Church, it is manifest that such honour is paid to the virgin and saints as is due only to God ; and that when Mary is addressed as mediatrix, as she is in

all the offices of the virgin, the high prerogatives of our blessed Lord are violated, and his dignity as Mediator taken from him and given to another. Also, it must be evident, to all candid and enlightened minds, that the man who assumes the rule and government of a pretended universal church on earth, with the unearthly attribute of perfectibility, is guilty of a grievous heresy ; inasmuch as the seat of the universal church is not on earth, and its head is Christ our Lord, and no mere man.

“ It was during my confinement by illness to my cell that these truths were forcibly impressed upon my mind, and that I was led to see that it would avail me nothing to attempt to dissemble or conceal my change of sentiments: though I shrunk with terror from the dreadful contest which was before me, and for which I justly calculated that I was entirely unequal. But I was comforted and strengthened by the passage before mentioned, namely, the assurance of support when brought before the councils of men ; which passage had presented itself many times to my eyes, as I turned over my little bible.

“ But my fever having left me, and no further excuse for remaining in my room being within my command, I was told one morning, that after matins I must attend Father Joachim in the confessional.— This message was brought me by the sister Annunciata ; who, coming into my cell, and, looking keenly at me, hinted pretty plainly that she thought I was pretending illness—that I had neglected my duties long enough—and that it was the pleasure of Madame that, ill or well, I must henceforth go through

the regular services appointed to the sisters. To all this I made no reply : but the sister having left me, I hastened to dress myself, considering all the time where I could hide my bible. I had no place of safe concealment in my room ; this I had well considered. Neither did I dare to hide it any longer about my person. At length the thought occurred to me, that I would conceal it in the hollow of the pedestal of the great bronze image of St Augustin, which, as you may well remember, stood in a niche on the great stairs. My precious little bible ! if I can save thee, I thought, I shall not be without comfort, and they will never think of seeking for the lamb in the lion's keeping. I watched my opportunity, therefore, and succeeded in hiding the book ; and being thus relieved of this present care, I went down to the confessional, in the chœur,* waiting till the father should appear in his place.

“I have often reflected on the curious state of my mind at that time. I was perfectly calm whilst waiting for the father ; and if I thought with apprehension of any thing, it was of the safety of my precious book. For although I had taken the precaution of learning as many passages by heart as I possibly could, yet it would have been an affliction beyond all I then apprehended to have lost my bible.

“The father was not long before he arrived. I heard his step in the apartment, and presently he entered the confessional, calling me by name ; and

* The religieuse is not in the same apartment with the confessor ; she speaks to him through the opening in the confessional.

because I did not answer at the instant, exhorting me to commence, without loss of time, in order that I might speedily relieve my mind from all the sins, original, actual, mortal, or venial, which had undoubtedly accumulated since I had last met him in that place.

“To this I replied, ‘Father, I have confessed my offences to God; and it has been revealed to me that I am forgiven through the blood of Christ our Lord, which was shed for me; and being washed in his blood, I cast my sins behind my back, and count it an unholy thing to turn to take them up again.’

“Father Joachim seemed so much overpowered by astonishment, that he gave no other proof of having heard me, but a sort of indistinct groan, by which I was so little startled, that I went boldly onward, speaking somewhat to this effect. ‘A mighty and astonishing change has passed in my mind, my father,’ I said, ‘since last I knelt in this confessional. I then believed that it was in the power of the priest, as holding the place of Jesus Christ, to absolve the penitent, according to the Latin formula, *Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis*.’* I believed that this sentence was no sooner pronounced by one appointed by the church, than all sins were pardoned to the penitent, and that a new grace was imparted to him, by which he recovered all that he had lost: for I had been taught that the priests had power to pardon sins, and that Jesus Christ, of whom they profess to be the vicars, and the ministers, had given them that power:

* *Catechisme Theologique of the Jesuits.*

but it has since been communicated to me, and that not by flesh and blood, or human reasoning, or human teaching, but by God himself, through the medium of his own word, that the ministry of man is altogether inefficacious in the work of man's salvation;—that it concerns only the making known that salvation to those who are the heirs of it;—for that they who are Christ's were predestinated to glory before the foundation of the world, and, being chosen by the father, they were redeemed by the Son, and are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Neither is it the work of man, but of God the Father, to make manifest to the soul of him that is saved, the completeness of that work of salvation, which was wrought for him through omnipotent wisdom. Nor ought the individual to whom this salvation has been revealed, ever again to presume to lay any stress on his own works or deservings, or to place his confidence on an arm of flesh, or the mediation of a creature with like passions with himself.'

"The father hemmed and groaned several times as I proceeded; but I was carried, as it were, out of myself, and was led, I trust by no improper feeling, to lay open at once the very bottom of my thoughts, as it regarded the pretensions of the Apostate Church; and were I to repeat what he said in reply to this,—perhaps the most extraordinary confession to which he had ever lent an astonished ear,—I should merely give utterance to some of the most terrible imprecations I had then ever heard. I remember one sentence only of all these anathemas, and it was to this effect—'Accursed be all those who, entering the

flock in sheep's clothing, bite like the serpent, and through one, endeavour to destroy the whole flock. All this is owing to that apostate Marie Barthelemis : may her soul and body be tormented in fires that shall never be extinguished—may she be stifled in smoke and sulphur—may she be fried* in eternal flames ; may she be ground under wheels of fire ; may she be impaled on burning spits ; may she endure eternal darkness, and be gnawed by never dying worms:—and for you, daughter,' he added, 'what do you deserve ? apostate, adulterous, infidel wretch as you are. How have you dared to listen to blasphemies, by which the majesty of the queen of heaven has been arraigned, her glory dimmed, and her prerogative insulted ! Recant, I say ! this instant recant ; or by the holy mother of God I will deliver you to be tormented, until you shall wish that you had never entered into life, and shall curse the father who was the author of your existence.'

"To all this I made no reply : but I certainly trembled so excessively that I could hardly support myself.

" 'You do not speak :' resumed the father, 'you do not utter a word.'

" 'I have nothing to say, father,' I replied, 'but that Madame Barthelemis never attempted to interfere with my religious principles, nor ever, as far as I can recollect, said one word to me on these subjects.'

"The father, it seems, had by this time recovered a certain degree of composure ; for he had taken his

* "Fricassez." *L'Histoire du Purgatoire de St Patrice*, p. 225.

place again in the confessional, and was presenting his ear to me. His voice was also more under his command: nay, it was evident that he had already regretted having broken out with so much violence; and his altered manner showed that he would gladly have led me so far to forget his harshness, as might induce me to speak with confidence of the means by which my sentiments had been so suddenly changed. 'If Marie Barthelemis was not the person who poisoned your principles, daughter, tell me who did? What means have been used to deprive you of your faith and hope?'

" 'I have had no human teacher, father,' I answered, 'I have stated to you, what I believe, that I have been divinely taught, and that the truths which I have learned are never inculcated by flesh and blood.'

" 'Let us reconsider what you have said: ' returned the father, 'if I understand you rightly, you stated your belief in certain doctrines, which, if received, would infallibly open the door to every kind of horror and abomination.'

" 'I do not understand you, father,' I replied.

"He then stated to me that the principles to which he alluded were those of election and predestination, 'by which,' he added, 'the doctrine of good works would necessarily be thrown to the ground, and in consequence every licentiousness would be tolerated. Now,' asked he, 'can we believe that a good God can show favour to men who despise his holy law, or disregard those who spend themselves in the performance of holy works?'

“ ‘I understand,’ I replied, ‘that those who are predestinated to life, are predestinated also to good works.’

“ ‘Indeed :’ he answered, ‘What is your authority for this assertion ?’

“ ‘Scripture :’ I replied, at the same time repeating the words of Paul, ‘for by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’ Eph. ii. 8—10.

“ ‘Scripture !’ he repeated, ‘whence had you this knowledge of scripture ?’

“ ‘I do not hesitate to say, father,’ I answered, ‘that I have been taught of God.’

“ ‘Truly,’ he replied, ‘there has been something unaccountable in the manner in which you have been instructed : but might it not be,’ he added, ‘if your teacher has been a supernatural one, that you may have mistaken the person ? I have heard of diabolical inspirations, as well as of divine ones : but let us return to our argument. Hear what holy mother church says respecting good works. Jesus himself has said, our good works are of so great value before God, that we may merit by them the kingdom of heaven.’

“ ‘I was aware that this was a quotation from the Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites, and I answered, ‘How then does our Lord say, that when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants ?’

“His reply was just what I expected, being taken from the same catechism, ‘This deduction is not good, because the sense of these words of our Lord is, that although it may be true, that we are obliged to do all the good that we can, even although we should not receive any reward; nevertheless God is so good a master, that he has deigned to engage his word, that if we serve him faithfully, he will pay our services with an eternal recompense.’* ”

“‘Still,’ I replied, ‘according to your own statement, father, the reward is due to the divine goodness, not to our own merits, and thus the opinions of all serious and humble persons must meet in the same point, namely, that salvation is a free gift, inasmuch as the acceptance of our best deeds is through the divine favour, and that the divine favour must needs have already been bestowed before these good works can be produced.’ ”

“‘Undoubtedly,’ replied the father, ‘the devil has inspired you with as much of his hellish wisdom as ever was uttered by the tongue of accursed heretic;’ and again he broke out into unrestrained passion, concluding by asking me, whether what I had revealed was to remain under the seal of confession; or whether I would choose that it should be told to Madame? ‘For you well know, daughter,’ he added, ‘that it is never permitted to the confessor to repeat what has been revealed to him in the confessional.’† ”

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

† Catechisme Theologique.

“‘I consider,’ I replied, ‘that you are at liberty, my father, to repeat any thing you choose of what I have said to you. My principles must be known sooner or later, to the whole household; and sooner or later I must make up my mind to all the consequences which I fear will ensue to me from my change of mind.’

“I remember little more of this conversation. I can only recollect that the father left me, after having once again attempted to terrify me into submission by threats; and that immediately afterwards I was called into the presence of Madame, who was sitting in unusual state in her parlour, in her large chair, embossed with golden studs, having la Mere Ursule on one side of her, and sister Annunciata on the other. It would be tedious to repeat all that passed between me and the Superieure during this conversation. Indeed it would not be possible: but never shall I forget the horror and astonishment expressed by the elder ladies, when I avowed my persuasion that there never could be any objects of faith but such as were revealed in scripture; and that hence all traditions and commandments of men were to be rejected.—There was no reasonable argument in any thing which either of them could allege in favour of these commands and traditions; nor, had they brought any such forward, would they have permitted me to answer them. On the contrary, they were so inflamed, that whenever I attempted to speak, they stopped my mouth—bidding me to keep my blasphemous opinions to myself; for it was heresy even to hear them uttered. At length they proceed-

ed to threatenings, and penances and fasts were the least of the evils with which they menaced me.

“During all this time, sister Annunciata had not spoken one word; but had stood, with an unmoved solemnity, at the side of Madame. At length, however, she availed herself of an instant of silence, and hinted that it would, perhaps, be as well to ask me by what means I had obtained the knowledge of those heretical arguments which I had brought forward to the father; and which I had, by my own account, derived from reading the Holy Scripture, and wresting it to my own purposes.

“‘It is impossible,’ replied la Mere Ursule, ‘that she can have procured a bible in this house.’

“‘Not by the aid of Madame Barthelemis?’ asked Annunciata.

“‘Let that be looked into;’ said the Superieure, ‘we will have her person and her cell examined: we will not trust to her own word, though it might be well so far to ascertain her vaunted love of truth, as to put the question to her;’ and, looking me full in the face, ‘Clarice,’ she said, ‘I charge you, in the name of that being whom you hold most sacred, tell me, have you obtained possession of the Holy Scriptures?’

“I remember that on hearing this question, I gave Annunciata a look which caused her to change her attitude, and, in reply I answered, to the Superieure, ‘My word, revered mother, is, as you have said, no longer to be depended upon by you; let it be as my sister Annunciata has said; let the examination be made, and if the holy volume is found in my pos-

session, it will then appear, I trust, whence those principles are derived, which have made me what I am.'

"Annunciata bit her lip, whilst her fine Italian eye flashed fire upon me: and I was at the same moment made aware, by that inward monitor which is sharper than a two-edged sword, that I had departed, in my last reply to Madame, from that spirit of meekness which should be the distinguishing mark of a child of God. I felt myself, in consequence constrained to fall on my knees before her to whom I had been wanting in respect, and was led to implore her pardon on that account, and further, to assure her that I would submit to her will in all things not forbidden by an authority higher than hers:—that I would serve the family as a menial; that I would, God helping me, quietly endure any penance which she might enjoin, if she would relieve me from those forms to which, in my present state of mind, I could not submit.

"The poor lady was evidently affected, as I knelt before her. I saw a tear glisten in her eye: it was a natural and gentle tear; but this soft and tender mood was as evanescent as the shadow of a cloud. The severe principles of the Apostate Church presently drove them back to their source, and I never but once afterwards witnessed, in this lady, the exhibition of any thing like pity for her once beloved Clarice.

"'Do you attempt to make terms with me, wretched heretic,' she said, 'arise! be gone! and be assured that nothing will help you with me, but the retrac-

tion of your accursed principles.' So speaking, she almost spurned me from her feet; directing those who were present to make a minute search in my apartment, and on my person, for the suspected volume. How truly thankful was I, then, that I had been led to conceal my little book; and, curious to say, the joy I felt in having so well succeeded in this precautionary measure, seemed, in a strange degree, to counteract my feelings of terror and sense of disgrace: for, after I had been roughly and rudely examined, I was left in my cell, la Mere Ursule having turned the key upon me, whilst a council was held, how it would be best to act towards me.

"These circumstances took place at the time sister Madeline was in her noviciate, and a few days before sister Honorine took the black veil; and it was probably on these, and some other accounts, judged better that mild measures should be taken with me for the present, in the hope, no doubt, that it might never be necessary to unfold the disgraceful tale of my delinquency to the bishop. I was, therefore, to my great amazement, after having been shut up for some hours in my own room, set at liberty, with a severe charge to avoid all conversation with any of the sisters; and with a command to observe certain penances, in the Superieure's private chapel, instead of the usual services in the chœur. I was somewhat puzzled at this unexpected mildness, but was, at the same time, admonished that I should be most carefully watched, and should also be subjected to very severe treatment, if it were found that I made any attempt to communicate with the sisters.

“Here was a relief which I did not expect, and I hope that I received it with gratitude and thanksgiving. I speedily ascertained, indeed, that I was closely observed, and the penances which were required of me were what I then thought very severe; for I was often commanded to watch before the image of the Virgin, in the Superieure’s chapel, during the greater part of the night. But, in the state my mind then was, I considered it such a relief to be excused from the superstitious services in the chœur, and to be left to my own reflections and to that divine communion to which I had been lately admitted, through the blessing of the Lord the Spirit on the divine word, that I was not only content, but even happy. And could I have dared to have spent those solitary hours in reading the sacred volume, I should have had great delight; but I felt that I should be running too great a risk, in bringing my treasure from its hiding place, at a moment when suspicion was so strongly excited against me.

“Such was my situation when sister Madeline laid aside her secular habits, nor was it changed till Honorine took the black veil. But immediately after that last event—I think it was the next day—la Mere Ursule coming to me, delivered the commands of the Superieure, that I should attend the confessional, and afterwards assist in the usual services in the chœur; thus taking it for granted, with a degree of art highly consistent with the spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, that the penances which had been enjoined, had done the work for which they were intended. This command threw

me into the greater confusion because I was not prepared for it, neither had I made up my mind how far I could accommodate my conduct to the rules of the house, and how far it was incumbent on me, with my new principles, to separate myself from their forms.

“How gladly would I, at that time, have made my escape from the establishment, had it been practicable in any way. But it was not so ; I was confined within bars of iron, and I was closely watched. However, to proceed with facts. When this message was delivered to me, I answered, ‘You are aware, respected mother, that my principles are such that I can no longer accommodate myself to the obedience required by the church in many particulars. All places are indeed alike to me as a believer, God being present every where, and his ear open to me in all places ; ‘for if I ascend up into heaven he is there ; if I make my bed in hell, he is there also ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.’ (Psalm cxxxix. 8—10.) Hence, when kneeling in the chœur, I may address my prayers to him as purely and sincerely as under the open canopy of heaven, and therefore I cannot refuse my obedience to the Superieure, in giving my attendance in the church ; but let it be understood that I will not open my lips to join in any service which is not approved by scripture. Understand me, mother,’ I added, interrupting her—for she would have spoken, ‘that I have been led, I trust divinely, to consider, that however

my opinions, as it regards religion, may be changed, yet that as long as Madame is the Superieure of the house which protects me, I am bound to obey her, in all things consistent with my higher duties and blessed privileges ; and that as I consider all forms which do not partake of idolatrous services to be unimportant, I am ready to submit to her pleasure, as it regards them.'

"La Mere Ursule was, as you may remember, slightly deaf, at least she frequently, under that pretence, caused the sisters to repeat any thing which she did not entirely approve, which might have been addressed to her; and accordingly on this occasion she caused me to repeat what I had said, taking up the word 'idolatrous' only in her reply, and asking me what I meant by it?

" 'This is what I mean,' I answered 'that as the scriptures declare that there is one only name under heaven, by which man can be saved, I am led to see that all services addressed to any other than God are idolatrous: and that hence, with the Almighty helping me, as he assuredly will, I will endure death itself, rather than pay that reverence to any created being, or to any symbol of whatever description, which is due to the Saviour only.'

"At this declaration, la Mere Ursule seemed to lose all self-command; for she raised her voice, and poured upon me a torrent of expletives, such as are not unseldom in the mouth of a zealous Catholic; and the words—accursed one, blasphemous heretic, imp of hell, spoken somewhat too loudly, brought in the sister Annunciata.

“‘Mother,’ she said, ‘the ears of the holy sisters should not be assailed with a controversy such as this, which I perceive you are carrying on with this——’ and here she hesitated, as if at a loss for an appellative by which to designate me : then, closing the door of the cell behind her, she inquired what had passed, and was told that I had blasphemously pronounced all services to be idolatrous which were addressed to any other name but that of the Son of Mary.

“‘Your presence is required by the Superieure, mother,’ replied Annunciata, ‘leave me with this apostate—I will deal with her ; and remember that this shameful strife ought never to be exhibited before those members of the establishment, who know not that such things are even in the very bosom of the church, and are still the faithful and confiding children of our Holy Mother.’

“La Mere Ursule instantly quitted the cell, muttering something with closed teeth and open lips, respecting the provocation which such as I was could not but give to a faithful and zealous daughter of the church ; and the next moment I found myself alone with one who had once been to me as the dearest of dear friends. But there she stood, drawn up, and cold and white as a marble Madonna ; and, if there were any expression in her countenance, it was that of scorn, mingled with aversion. Nevertheless, as I recollected her former tender love, I was affected, and said, ‘Dear sister, you will not, I am convinced, promote any measures of severity towards me which can be avoided. Remember how we once loved

each other, and that we were once as real sisters. Plead for me, that I may be heard before I am condemned; and let me at least hope, even should the worst befall me that man can do against me, that I may possess your pity.'

"Insensibly, as I had spoken, I had drawn towards her, but she stepped back as I approached, and with an expression of consummate contempt, which slightly elevated her beautiful lip—for ah! she was superlatively beautiful in her external form—she motioned with her hand to me to stand back, coolly requiring of me to say what the subject of my discourse with la Mere Ursule had been.

"'You may easily surmise it, Annunciata,' I replied.

"'I am to understand, then, Clarice,' she said, 'that the penances enjoined by the church have not produced the effect which we had charitably hoped and expected?'

"'If you expected,' I answered, 'that solitude and long fastings——'

"'And many prayers,' she added.

"'And many prayers,' I repeated, '(for I thank God that I have been led to lift up my heart continually in prayer) should have tended to restore my mind to that state in which it was when I took the vows, I must freely and candidly confess, that they have utterly failed, as regards any such purpose; and that reflection and meditation have only tended to prove more and more to my mind, that scripture is the only fountain of truth, and that all traditions of men tend only to darken first, and finally to extinguish, the light of truth.'

“Annunciata replied, ‘You then consider yourself, Clarice, to be wiser than all the saints and martyrs, apostles and holy men, which have gone before you?’

“‘Let us reason consistently, sister Annunciata,’ I said. ‘Observe that I build no argument on my own judgment; but I maintain that the revealed word of God ought to be the rule of our lives, and that what is not found therein ought not to be required of an individual, either as an article of faith or principle of duty. For thus says the inspired writer:—“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”’

“‘You seem,’ replied Annunciata, ‘to be singularly well instructed in these scriptures; permit me to ask you, who profess such a love of the truth, how you have happened to obtain such a knowledge of those writings?’

“‘I do not hesitate to repeat what I have before said,’ I answered, ‘namely, that I have been divinely taught.’

“‘Miraculously so?’ resumed Annunciata, ‘or by a divine light shed upon the text in the act of reading? Permit me to ask you, in what sense I am to take this assertion, namely, that you have been divinely taught?’

“I was aware, that, had I answered that the divine light which had shone upon my mind, had operated entirely without visible means, I should have been uttering a falsehood. I was, therefore,

somewhat at a loss what to answer, and endeavoured to evade a direct reply by saying, that the hearts of all men were in the hands of God, and that he could impart that which he pleases to any individual, without availing himself of the ministry of man.

“ ‘ You allow, then, of miracles,’ she replied.

“ ‘ I believe that a superhuman work,’ I answered, ‘ is constantly going on in the hearts of men, by which those who were dead in sin are made alive unto God.’

“ ‘ No one will question that,’ she answered, ‘ but I understood that you questioned the power of the church to perform visible miracles.’

“ ‘ I am inclined to think,’ I replied, ‘ that during the present dark state of the visible churches, it does not please God to manifest any miraculous works in the natural world.’

“ ‘ And yet,’ returned Annunciata, ‘ you pretend not only to have received the knowledge of spiritual things through the divine influences, but also of natural things. For although there may be, and are, feelings and affections which are altogether spiritual, and which might be imparted to a solitary ascetic, in the depths of a howling wilderness, with little aid of man’s teaching, yet it is obvious that the letter of scripture is a natural thing, capable of being acquired by human industry ; and consequently if you, Clarice, have obtained the knowledge of that letter without human aid, it is a miracle, and one surpassing any to which our holy Mother Church has ever asserted her right.’

“ To all this I answered, ‘ Permit me, my sister,

to put question for question. Wherefore do you suppose that I must have seen a bible lately? Do you think that by scripture only I could have been instructed in arguments such as I have used.' And then I added, with a sudden gush of tenderness which I could not repress. 'Oh, Annunciata! friend of former years! would that you would permit me to open my whole heart to you, and to plead the cause of those eternal truths, which, by their bright shining upon my soul, have set me free from all the terrors of superstition, from all fears for my future well-being, and almost steeled me against all sense of present calamity, causing me to feel my assurance of perfect and everlasting happiness in an endless life already commenced.'

"'You equivocate,' replied Annunciata, 'and refuse to answer the question I have put so often to you. Has, or has not, the reading of the scripture been the means of changing your principles?'

"'If my principles are correct according to scripture,' I answered, 'I am no heretic. If they are contrary to the words of truth, how could they have been produced by reading those words?'

"'Error may originate,' replied the sister, 'more readily from the misconstruction of scripture, than from the entire neglect of reading and hearing it explained; hence the rulers of the holy Mother Church deny it to the ignorant multitude, and do well in so doing. You hear it explained from the pulpit continually, Clarice; you learn portions of it in the Catechism; you meditate on passages, given for that purpose by the Superieure, every day,—what

would you wish more ? If you assert a privilege to judge and think for yourself, you deny the authority of the church, and are justly chargeable with heresy.’

“ ‘What do you define the church to be, Annunciata ?’ I asked.

“ ‘It is the assembly of all those who believe in Jesus Christ, and who acknowledge the sovereign Roman pontiff as his vicar.’

“ ‘Who established this church ?’ I said.

“ ‘Jesus Christ himself,’ she replied. ‘The invisible chief of the mystic body of the church is Jesus Christ, and its visible chief is the pope, its members being all the faithful.’*

“ ‘Permit me to ask,’ I said, ‘Is it the visible or the invisible church of which you speak, Annunciata ?’

“ ‘What is the tendency of your question ?’ she asked.—‘I speak of the holy Apostolic Roman universal church.’

“ ‘So much I comprehend,’ I replied ; ‘but is this church, having a visible body, the visible or the invisible church ?’

“ ‘She seemed to be a little confused at this question ; but, recovering herself in a moment, she answered, ‘The church is a mystic body, and the soul which animates it is the Holy Spirit. It cannot therefore err, because it is animated and ruled by the spirit of truth.’†

“ ‘What am I to understand by the word mystic, Annunciata ?’ I asked.

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites. † Ibid.

“She shook her head at me, saying, ‘Ah, Clarice, you are in the gall of bitterness—to what do all these questions tend?’

“‘To truth, I trust,’ was my reply. ‘What do you mean by mystic?’

“‘You take a position which does not appertain to you,’ she answered. ‘What belongs to you, as an impious heretic, but a seat in dust and ashes? And yet you presume to argue with me. Do you pretend to ask what mystic signifies? Know you not that a mystic body is one to which certain mysterious qualities appertain, which are beyond the comprehension of the natural understanding?’

“‘This body, then,’ I replied, ‘which you call the church, is not a natural but a mystic body; how then can it have a natural head (such as is the Roman pontiff), and yet retain its unity, for you will not dispute that the church is one?’

“‘The true church,’ she replied, ‘is, in the first place one, that is to say, it can have only one faith and one chief; in the second place, it is universal and perpetual; and, in the third place, it is holy. Nor do I comprehend your argument, when you say that a mystic body cannot have a natural head, and yet retain its unity.’

“‘Because,’ I replied, ‘new wine cannot be contained in old skins; nor can a new piece be sewed on an old garment; neither can the spiritual head belong to the corrupt natural body, or the mystic body appertain to the natural head.’

“‘The evil one,’ returned Annunciata, with some violence, ‘has helped you with these arguments,

Clarice, and though I would by no means be forward to pronounce the anathema maranatha on your soul, yet I tell you that the notions which you hold tend to eternal damnation in the fires of hell. The Holy Mother give me patience to hear you out ! Do you deny the authority, the purity, and the universality of the church ?

“ ‘No,’ I replied ; ‘I deny none of these. I believe in the holy Catholic Church ; I acknowledge its spiritual head, even the Lord the Saviour ; I believe that its body is, as you say, a mystic one, composed of all whom the Father has given to the Son throughout all ages. I bow to its authority ; I acknowledge its holiness and beauty as derived from the Saviour, but I deny that it has a seat on earth, or any authority over the kingdoms of this world ; and having found my Father in heaven, I am resolved, henceforward, to call no one father on earth, for my inheritance is above ; and where my treasure is, there I trust my heart will ever be.’

“ ‘Am I to understand by all this,’ said the sister, evidently putting strong force upon herself to restrain herself from any further violence of expression, ‘that you are resolved to cherish your heretical opinions at all hazards ?’

“ ‘I have counted the cost,’ I replied, ‘and I trust that I shall be preserved even unto the end ; for He that is with me is stronger than he that is against me.’

“ ‘I came,’ she answered in reply to this, ‘to enforce a command sent from Madame, through la Mere Ursule, which command was to this purpose,

namely, that you should return to your duties; for it has never,' she added, 'entered into the mind of the Superieure that you could possibly continue in a state of obstinacy, after having endured so many penances. It must remain then with you to decide what message I must carry to Madame;' and having spoken thus much, she stood in mute and solemn attention to my reply.

" 'Tell the honoured lady,' I answered, 'that I consider myself bound to obey her commands in all things consistent with what I know to be my duty to a higher power.'

" 'And this,' she replied, 'is what you desire me to say at all hazards.'

" 'Yes,' I replied, 'at all hazards.'

" 'Be it so,' she answered, and left the cell; shortly after which I was summoned into the presence of Father Joachim, whom I found in the Superieure's parlour, that lady being also present. The father, I instantly saw, was in a fearful passion, for his face was perfectly livid, though it seems that some motive, which I did not then understand, rendered it necessary for him to restrain his emotions; and this necessity contended so violently with the vehemence of his zeal for the honour of his church, that every limb was in agitation; and whilst the conference lasted, he paced the room with rapid yet heavy steps, turning towards me, from time to time, with fiery eyes, trembling lips, and teeth which gnashed and foamed. His hints respecting what I might expect in case of continued obstinacy, however, were awful, though his arguments were few. And the Superi-

eure sat by, pale and still ; and really I think (to do her justice) actually terrified at the condition in which she saw me, prepared, as she thought, as a brand for everlasting burnings ; for, as she herself has often said to me, my offences were far beyond the purifying fires of purgatory, even were those fires permitted to spend their utmost fury upon me for millions of ages.

“It would be tedious and unprofitable to repeat all that Father Joachim thought proper to say to me ; but the conference ended in a manner which I did not expect. Instead of bringing my obedience to a test, as I had expected, by insisting on my joining in some idolatrous service, I was ordered to return to the mode of life which had been enjoined on me for some weeks past, in which my sufferings were so far less than those which I yet anticipated, that I felt this decision to be entirely a reprieve.

“A diet of bread and water, and many hours of solitary meditation in the abbess’s private chapel, both in the day and in the night, during which I was admonished to repeat so many hundreds, nay thousands, of ave marias, kneeling always upon my knees, were nothing when compared with the horrors with which I had been threatened ; and therefore when I was told to withdraw to my solitude, it was difficult for me to conceal the satisfaction with which I hastened to obey, for I had found pleasures in this retirement, or rather pleasures had been found for me, which I can hardly describe. How truly doth the scripture say, ‘He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.’ I had learned many scriptures

by heart, and these were brought to my remembrance most wonderfully in these solitary hours. Even passages which I had acquired in my nursery, and in the English language, came back to my mind at those times, with small portions of hymns, replete with gospel truth ; and such sweet recollections of my father, my brother, my pious nurse, and the green and fragrant fields, and violet banks, and hedge-rows of my native land, all spread beneath a summer sky, presented themselves at those times to my fancy, that I would even weep with joy to think that these were but the earnest of my heavenly Father's love, and but faint and indistinct images of those delights which are prepared for such as have been brought to love the Father, as seen through the Son, and as brought near and made known by the Holy Spirit. And at these times it was unfolded to me, that the whole course of time might be divided into three dispensations :—the first, in which the human race, being in its infancy, was taught by palpable figures, this dispensation terminating soon after the manifestation of the Holy Ghost :—the second, being that which is entirely spiritual, and hence not to be apprehended by the natural faculties, during which period the divine work is carried on by the Lord the Spirit in the heart of the individual, and multitudes, past count, are brought in again into that union with God, which is eternal life ; this mighty work being effected by the secret inflowings of the Divine Spirit, by which the body, which was in a state of death according to nature, becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost :—and the third and last, which partakes of, or rather veri-

fies in perfection, the imperfect glories which have gone before under the two former dispensations ; being that portion of time when the redemption of the body of the believer being complete, the soul and the body shall rejoice together with the incarnate Redeemer. Then came verses like these to my mind : — ‘ Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust : for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.’ Isaiah xxvi. 19. ‘ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.’ John xi. 25, 26. And from time to time I stole my little bible from its hiding place, and drew fresh draughts from the fountain of truth ; truly I had many sweet and refreshing moments during that season, and I have often considered that these refreshments were vouchsafed to me, in order that I should be strengthened and invigorated for that which was to follow.

“ I have calculated that these conversations with la Mere Ursule, Annunciata, and Father Joachim, took place on the very day that sister Angelique entered the house as pensionaire ; and that the motive which held back the heads of the establishment from more violent measures with me, was the very precarious state of the times, better known to Father Joachim than to us within the house.

“ The monastic establishments had already been destroyed in France, and there was a great cry raised against the rulers of the church in other countries.

It was, therefore, desirable that I should be brought to obedience, if possible, without exasperating any of the younger members of the family, who are always jealous of any stretch of authority, or any semblance of severity ; and, accordingly, having been kept 'in penitence' until the day of the profession of sister Angelique, the Superieure then called me into her presence, and having stated to me, on the one hand, what the consequences would be if I continued in disobedience (and very terrible indeed did she make these to appear), and on the other, the immediate relief which I should experience in case of my submission, she proceeded, without permitting me to reply, to lay her commands upon me, that I should join the rest of the family at the goute. My dear sister Pauline witnessed the effect of my appearance there ; and as I could not be prevailed upon to say that I would renounce my heresies, or even attempt to disguise them, as the Superieure, in the true spirit of the Apostate Church, would have persuaded me that I might have done with safety to my conscience, under the plea of necessity, other measures were soon after had recourse to. I was stigmatized as being under the influence of evil spirits ; and although permitted to go at large in the house, and commanded to attend the services, yet I was not permitted to hold any converse with my sisters. It was then that I began to feel the furious and unrelenting nature of Popish bigotry ; and poor Annunciata, thinking, perhaps, that she did God service, was not unseldom the instrument of their severity.

"I have used a hard word, God forgive me, but

my trials were dreadful ; yet, how far short did they fall of those which have been endured by many of the excellent of the earth ; by many of those ‘ who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong.’ It was between the period in which I was first denounced as a demoniac and that in which I was publicly anathematized by Father Joachim, that I was made to attend all the services at the door of the chœur ; in comparison of which, the solitude which I had enjoyed in the Supérieure’s chapel was ease to me, for I was obliged to retain always the same posture, holding the heavy unlighted taper. I was at large, indeed, in the house, and this was only a sort of refinement of punishment, because I was thereby only the more exposed to universal scorn ; for there were few whose eyes could penetrate the cloud in which I was involved ;—few, very few ; only, indeed, the kind Mere Genefride, who often gave me a look of pity, which descended as a ray of light on a darkened landscape, and my own sweet sisters, Pauline and Angelique, to whom I owed that communication from my beloved brother, which, although I understood it not so at that time, was the forerunner of my great and wonderful deliverance. But on this topic I will not expatiate, lest I should lose the thread of that narrative, of which the clue is already too much broken. My strength, as you well know, my sisters, at length sunk under these continual fatigues of standing during all the services ; and the interest of

some of the sisters, it seems, having been excited in my favour, it was thought expedient to turn the course of these feelings by that test to which all the family was witness; and the cross having fallen at my feet, I was banished for ever from the society, as one rejected by the church, and devoted to eternal destruction.—And then, my friends, then it was that I was made to drink deep, deep indeed, of the cup of fury, mixed up and poured out by the idolatrous church, even her on whose forehead is written, *Mystery, Babylon, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.*

“I was seen no more in the family, as you well remember, subsequent to that evening, but was sent back, after the mockery of the fall of the cross, to my own cell in a private part of the house, where, for several days, I know not how many, I was left alone, without seeing a living creature, my food being given me through a tour, and my door being opened to me every night by la Mere Ursule, in order that I might go down to pray and meditate in the cemetiere, under the white marble cross; and in order that my figure should not be discerned by the sisters descending to, and ascending from the officium nocturnum, I was admonished to wrap myself in a white sheet, and to kneel on the eastern side of the cross. During these cold vigils, and in that gloomy place, amid the mouldering bones of hundreds who had, through ages past, lived and died within those ancient seats of superstition, my meditations often took so sad a form, that I used to weep continually, sitting on the marble slab at the foot of the cross, with my head resting on

my knees, till, in that attitude, sleep would sometimes surprise me ; and it was on one of these occasions that a sudden gust of wind lifting the drapery, which I had drawn over my head, occasioned the alarm which was given by sister Clotilde, with which I was immediately reproached on my return to my cell, by la Mere Ursule ; and, as I still refused to yield any of my opinions, it was at last decided that I should be removed from the place which I had hitherto occupied, to that which was said to be more fit for one so lost to all sense of right as I was then supposed to be.

“ I could not, at that time, account for this rather sudden change of measures, but I comprehended it afterwards. It seems that the Father Joachim had a particular friend, a Jesuit, and one with whom he had associated in the Jesuits' College at Nice, where he had been educated. This man, namely, the Father Juliano, had gone to Rome at the time his friend had come to St Siffren, and had there become the favourite of a certain cardinal, who had pushed his fortune, giving him an important place in the Inquisition, besides other benefices and nominal cures, one of which was under our own bishop. In this last character he was come to St Siffren, to prepare things for the reception of his superior, who was shortly expected ; and it seems that Father Joachim had mentioned my case to him, and been severely reproved for the lenity which had been shown to me. How truly does the scripture say, ‘ The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.’ Certainly the treatment I had received up to that time had been severe enough to subdue any spirit, supported

by no strength but that which is natural. But as this treatment was decided to be too mild, and as it was said, that when the bishop came, he would think it had been so,—my sin being that of heresy after having known the truth, and hence being the greatest which can be conceived,—other measures were advised, and Father Juliano had entreated that they should be acted upon that very night: and although Madame had kindly wished to have had a private conversation with me in the morning, before I had, as it were, sealed my condemnation, yet the alarm which I speak of, which was attributed to some carelessness on my part, hastened their purposes, and accordingly la Mere Ursule came to see me as soon as I had returned to my cell, and bidding me to follow her, she led me through certain private passages into the apartment of the Superieure.

“There she sat, leaning her head upon her hand, her arm resting upon a marble slab, on which was a crucifix, with a light burning before it. She seemed much agitated. Annunciata stood behind her chair, in an attitude usual with her, namely, having her arms folded within her wide sleeves, and her eyes fixed on the ground. Then and there the Superieure first solemnly stated the awful alternative which was before me,—either on the one hand a decided recantation of my errors, which I was to evince at that present time, by kneeling down and adoring the visible cross; or, on the other, perpetual confinement in a dungeon beneath the house, in eternal seclusion from the light of day.

“‘Not eternal, Madame,’ was the answer which I

made; 'my seclusion from the light of day will not be eternal. I know in whom I have trusted, and I shall not be confounded.'

"Annunciata changed her posture as I uttered these words, but spoke not; and the abbess again addressed me—'Do you understand, Clarice,' she asked, 'what the church asserts respecting heretics?' I made no reply, and she thus proceeded: 'It is certain that there are many heretics who know not their error; but there are very few who have not great cause to apprehend that they are in error. And even should they have no doubt, and should they believe themselves to be in the true church, it is, however, almost impossible that they should save themselves, because it is almost impossible, in the liberty in which they live, not to fall into an infinity of disorders and great sins, from which they cannot recover themselves by the sacrament of penitence, which they have not, but only by a pure love of God, of which it is very difficult to form an act, such as is requisite in order to be saved.'*

"I had learned all this exordium by heart, and knew whence it came, but I do not remember my reply. The conference was long, and the Superieure seemed to me to be truly earnest in her endeavours to persuade me to recant; but through the divine grace, which was made sufficient for me, I was enabled to persevere. Indeed my mind was strangely, as it were, diverted from some of the most frightful circumstances of my situation, by the dread

* Catechisme Theologique of the Jesuits.

lest an examination of my person, or a change of dress, should be proposed; in which case, my precious little bible would have been found, for I had been divinely led, I believe, a few nights before, to take it from its hiding-place, and conceal it about my person, in the same manner in which it was found when I arrived in this happy resting-place. However, no personal examination of me was proposed; and when all hope of my submission had been given up by the Superieure, who certainly showed more feeling during this scene than either of the other persons present, I was admonished that my fate was sealed, and that I must submit to it with what heart I could. And immediately, at the signal of the abbess, Annunciata and la Mere Ursule came forward, and each taking hold of an arm, they drew me out of the chamber; this force being necessary, as I was endeavouring to throw myself at the feet of the Superieure to implore her mercy, as a last resource.

“‘Kneel not to me, miserable apostate, kneel not to me! Bend not before me those stubborn knees, which despise the symbol of the dying Jesus!’ she exclaimed; and rising, with a sort of hysterical shriek, she added, ‘O Clarice! unhappy Clarice! would I had died before I had seen this day!’

“‘Mother! dear, dear mother!’ I replied, ‘believe me, believe your unhappy child! I do not despise the cross of Christ—nay, I glory in it—I live by it—it is all in all to me; but the visible and palpable symbol I cannot worship.’ I was proceeding, when la Mere Ursule struck me on the mouth, saying,

‘Speak not your blasphemies in this sacred chamber;’ and then placing her strong arm round my waist, she dragged me out of the Superieure’s apartment, and through her private chapel, into an anti-room, which led to a cell over the porch which looks upon the cemetiere.

“In this cell were two tapers burning, upon a marble slab, one of which was instantly taken up by Annunciata, and the other by la Mere Ursule, both of them having loosed their hold of me at the same moment. This cell, as you may remember, sisters, is wainscotted with black larch-wood in pannels. The window is small, and doubly grated, commanding the cemetiere and the whole of the surrounding buildings.

“Being at liberty for a moment, I fell down upon my knees, not to ask pity from those who knew no such feeling, but to implore that support from God which is never withheld in the time of need. But I was rudely lifted from this posture by the mother, whilst the sister, moving a secret spring in the wainscot, caused a pannel to open, by which a flight of narrow winding stairs revealed itself to our view. A damp cold air at the same time rushed into the chamber, causing the flames of the tapers to flare in the faces of those who held them.

“The sight of these stairs was so terrible to me, that I sprang back to the extent of the chamber, and struggled with my companions when they would have seized my arms again. I know not what I said to them—I was in a frenzy, and shrieked wildly, reproaching Annunciata in a way which I have since

reflected upon with much sorrow, ever recollecting with pain one expression which I used, namely, 'You will one day remember this with anguish and sorrow of heart, and that day may arrive sooner than you think.' God forgive me this expression! There was a spirit of vengeance in it; and such breakings forth of natural corruption ought to admonish us that our strength is in the Lord, and in him only, and that the moment we are left to ourselves, we make it appear that we are as utterly vile, as far as self is concerned, even after having been made to receive the truth, and feel its power, as we were when in total ignorance of its saving influences. But I do not remember this scene accurately—it seems like a terrible dream, in which every image of horror was collected by the infernal powers; not to subdue me—for it was impossible to tear me from the arms of omnipotent grace which surrounded me—but to exhibit the malice of the evil one.

“My struggles were, however, vain; I was dragged down these winding stairs, and through long vaulted passages and gloomy chambers, where the long pent up vapours caused the chest to contract, as under some terrible load. At length we arrived at the end of a long passage, at an iron-bound massive door, filling a narrow pointed portal. What my thoughts were when I saw this last earnest of all I most feared on earth, viz. perpetual solitary confinement, I cannot say; for I was stupified—I was like one in a terrible dream—I did not attempt to speak. Yet my state was not that of despair, though I am unable to describe it; of this, however, I am assured,

that God can give a peace of mind which is entirely independent of outward circumstances. Nor does it proceed from any thing like self-esteem, as philosophy vainly boasts, in some such oft-repeated sentence as the following, namely, 'that virtue is its own reward,' and 'a sense of rectitude will carry a man triumphantly through every adverse turn of fortune ;' —for at that crisis of severe trial I was by no means pleased with myself. I had broken out, but a few minutes before, in expressions unworthy of my Christian calling ; and this offence had, through the divine grace, been made to divest me of that proud feeling of martyrdom (if I may use the term) which was creeping upon me, when la Mere Ursule had so far lowered herself as to strike me on the mouth.

“ A key was produced without delay for opening the lock, and the door the next moment swung on its hinges ; but before my eye could penetrate the obscurity which was within, my companions pushed me forward through the portal, closing the door after me with a jarring noise, the reverberation of which must almost have reached to the chambers above ; and all this was effected with such haste, that, ere I could recollect myself, I heard the departing steps of my persecutors dying away along the passage. But I was not left in darkness, as I had anticipated. I was in a wide chamber of unhewn stone, or probably partly cut out from the rock on which the house was founded. From the arched ceiling hung an iron lamp, which gave a faint and glimmering light, though one which I afterwards found quite sufficient for every desirable purpose. I observed that there

were several pieces of furniture in this gloomy apartment. I saw a pallet bed near to the door, and another at the farther end of the room, with a table and a stool. But whilst I wondered, and asked myself, Have all these preparations been made for me?—a figure rose from the farthest of the two pallets I have mentioned, and stepping on the side of the bed, exhibited the dim outline of a human form.

“I was taken by surprise ; I had no idea that I should find a companion in this place, and I could think of nothing earthly. All the terrors of superstition were let loose upon me at once ; I shrieked wildly, and fell on the cold pavement in a deadly swoon. Thus, as I have often since considered, do we meet those blessings which approach in dubious form, being incapable of appreciating the many mercies which are in the first instance not inviting to flesh and blood. You look at me, my friends—you seem amazed, and well you may be ; but you have heard of Agnace—her history shall be explained in its place.

“Had I been apprized that I was to have a companion in my solitude, I should have rejoiced in the anticipation. As it was, as I before stated, the sudden appearance of this poor emaciated creature terrified me beyond expression ; for, as it may be well believed, she looked more like one falling into the grave, or rising from it, than any thing else I can conceive. Dear Agnace ! Oh, how did I love that poor solitary one. The few short weeks we spent together did more to unite our hearts than years of kindly intercourse could have done in ordinary cir-

cumstances. It was a blessed arrangement of divine Providence, which brought me into the society of that poor Agnace.

“It was long before I awoke from my swoon, and when I did revive I found the poor nun busy about me, bathing my temples with water : she had nothing else wherewith to help me ; and when I opened my eyes and saw her again, I should assuredly have relapsed into fainting from very terror, had she not spoken and bade me not fear ; calling me poor young creature, and weeping for my sufferings.

“On my eagerly asking her who and what she was, she told me her history in a few words :—a history which filled me with amazement : for although I had heard that such a person had been, yet I had never entertained the slightest idea that she still was.

“She was a little woman, but had the appearance of extreme old age. Her face was long ; her features set and rigid, and she was bent nearly double, as if from age, though she had not attained her fiftieth year. She had endeavoured, I found, to raise me when I lay insensible, but had not had strength ; and when I was sufficiently recovered, she guided me to a pallet, which had been set for me in a corner of the wide chamber, and there laying me, she drew the thin covering over me and sat down at my feet.

“‘Speak to me ; speak to me ?’ I said, ‘let me hear the human voice—that voice divine : tell me, why are you here ? how long have you been confined in this place ? Why have I been placed with you, and not alone ? Why have they showed me so much mercy, as to give me a companion in my captivity ?—There is kindness in this.’

“ ‘They have brought you here, poor child,’ she answered, ‘that I may tell you how I fell into deadly heresy, and how I have been restored to the bosom of the church by a severity which will appear to be kindness in that day when I shall find myself for ever free from these poor rags of mortality.’

“ ‘Have you, then, recanted?’ I asked.

“ ‘I have seen my error,’ she replied.

“ I sighed deeply, and even wept ; and these tears seemed to relieve me.

“ ‘They have brought you here,’ she said, ‘that I may talk with you, dear child ; God help you, and God help me. May our acquaintance with each other in this dungeon be the means of our reunion in glory. Therefore I pray that I may be assisted in the task set before me. Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina, ave Maria gratia plena ;’ and she crossed herself several times.

“ To all this I made no reply : ‘It will be a precious and blessed work,’ she continued, ‘to set in the balance against my many sins, if I should be the means of leading you, my child, from the way of error.’

“ ‘Are you quite sure,’ I asked, ‘that you are now nearer the truth than when you first entered this dungeon ? Dear mother, time must now be short with you, and you have had few means of instruction. As we have thus met, let us together examine the truth. Do you know the Holy Scriptures ?’

“ ‘How should I, my child,’ she replied, ‘I never saw them.’

“ ‘Then by what means did you acquire those

principles by which you incurred the displeasure of the church.'

" 'I derived them,' she answered, 'from a young lady to whom I was employed to teach Italian; and she instructed me from certain books, the tendency of which was to overthrow all religion. I was a spirited and proud girl, and I spoke contemptuously of the mother of God. Misere me, domina! I was obstinate, too, and I refused submission to the commands of the church;—they dealt harshly with me, and my reason gave way. I became a maniac, or, rather, I was delivered over to Satan to work his will with me: but they made me see my error. Yet it was not till the very memory of my name had passed away from all in the house. They will not tell me how many years are gone over my head since I was here. I have nothing whereby to count the progress of days: but I have enjoyed many comforts, daughter, since I have been readmitted into the bosom of the church.'

" 'And was it to obtain these comforts, mother,' I asked, 'that you were induced to recant?'

" 'No:,' she replied, 'I trust that I have not committed that sin; inasmuch as I had recanted some time before light, and warm clothing, and better food were granted me.'

" 'I thank God that you can say this:,' I answered, 'but dear mother, let us consult and pray together. Let us, with the divine help, examine the truth, and having no other hope, let us take fast hold, the Almighty helping us, of that which we may be led to see as truth. For if these our spiritual rulers are

right, I do not hesitate to say, the scriptures are false ; and if the scriptures are right, the Roman Catholic Church is idolatrous, corrupt, deceitful, and altogether abominable.'

" 'Nay, daughter,' replied the old religieuse, clasping her attenuated hands, 'nay, do not speak so,' and she looked round the dungeon as if in terror, crossing herself repeatedly, and invoking various saints, and entreating their prayers, as in the Kyrie Eleeson.

"But as my present history must necessarily run to a great length, I will take some future occasion to describe at large all the passages of my intercourse with this poor Agnace. I shall merely say, that within a short time of my becoming her companion in that drear abode, which from all the computation I have been able to make, she had occupied alone for thirty years, I was taken very ill, and remained for many hours quite helpless and unable to assist myself ; and that during that time no mother could have been kinder and more tender than dear Agnace was to me. I could weep now only to think of the various ways in which she tried to ease and comfort me, and it was wonderful, and surely divinely ordered, how her natural affections, which for years had entirely wanted an object, were, as it were, kindled by me into a flame, which burnt high and bright, and terminated only with her existence.

"I have since been led to see, also, what I did not understand at that time, that it was expedient that this affection for me should have been kindled in her breast, to prepare her for receiving that instruction which I was afterwards enabled to give her, through

the guidance, I trust, of the Lord the Spirit. This, I say, I did not understand at the time, though I have seen it since; but I should despair of describing all the little kindnesses of this poor deserted creature. With us it was indeed one long night, the progress of time being only marked by the visits of la Mere Ursule, to bring us our food, and such small matters as were deemed sufficient for us, which she constantly passed to us by means of a tour: but though I could not distinguish day from night, I could not be deceived in this fact, that there were few hours in the twenty-four in which Agnace was not by me, serving me with her trembling hands, or endeavouring to soothe and comfort me by using arguments for that purpose which were far from being suited to the state of my mind, though they might have been so to hers. Poor old lady! I think I see her meagre figure now, her pale face attenuated by suffering, and her gentle eye, which was never again to see the light of day; and behold her hovering about my pallet, and trying to render that easy which had never been intended to be so. Ah! poor sufferer; how I found my heart drawn towards her. I gave her all my confidence, even to the extent of confessing that I possessed a bible; and when I was sufficiently recovered I was induced, without loss of time, to lead her to the study of the truths therein contained. I read to her for hours; not only for her but my own instruction. Oh! with what eager joy did we imbibe the water of life, flowing from the holy word. I knew not then how short the time of the poor sufferer was, but I felt myself impelled to say all that was in my mind, and I thank God that my

humble endeavours were speedily blessed, through the divine grace, and according to the scripture, which saith, 'he will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness.' (Rom. ix. 28). Hitherto that poor Agnace had never seen a bible; not one single drop of the fountain of truth had ever reached her lips in an uncorrupted state—not one draught had passed her lips which had not been fouled by the feet (Ezek. xxxiv. 18), and yet, ignorant as she was, deplorably and wretchedly ignorant as to aught which man could teach, her soul was as a watered garden, prepared for the seed, which was shed thereon through the ministry of the word, and which forthwith sprang up and brought forth an hundred fold. It is true, that through the force of terror she had, within a few years past, entirely conformed herself to all that was required of her by her spiritual tyrants: yet, making all allowances for her weakness of body, her ignorance of the divine letter, and her timidity of mind, this poor creature—and that before I became her companion—was a most eminent example of regenerating and sanctifying grace, and even of illumination, so far as it regarded the preparation of the heart, and the readiness to receive the truth in all humility and self-abasement; and all this mighty change had been wrought in her soul in entire independence of human means.

“It would be a curious inquiry how far instances of this kind are common; an inquiry which can only be answered from scripture, and which will in its establishment meet with much opposition, inasmuch as it tends to the lowering of the importance of the ministry of man, who proudly applies to himself those

words of holy writ, namely, 'how shall they hear without a preacher.' None considering that he by whom the mouth of man is opened, is able to speak without the assistance of the creature whom he has made ; none saying, 'Where is God our Maker, who giveth songs in the night, who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.' (Job, xxxv. 10, 11). 'For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not : in a dream ; in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed ; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' (Job xxxiii. 14—16).

"How full of deep interest are these reflections ; how they tend to lower the pretensions of man, and to fill the heart with hope for multitudes of those poor creatures which are beyond the influence of any human ministry. It is true that the ministry of man is necessary for the admission of an individual into the visible church ; and multitudes of those who minister therein have, no doubt, been employed to point out the way of life to those who were wandering in the paths of darkness. Yet that the ministry of man is necessary to God's purposes, is still a question with me ; or that he does not carry on his divine purposes in man's regeneration, in many instances in total independenec of all human means, I dare not say : but these are mysteries which are not given to us to understand. What mind by searching can find out God ?

"Suffice it to say, that I found poor Agnace fully and divinely prepared to receive the instruction

which I was enabled to give her by the ministry of the word,—that in a few weeks she was enabled to reject all those fallacious views with which Father Joachim had endeavoured to fill her poor mind, and to fix her entire dependence on Christ her Saviour; to see also that her redemption was assured; that the divine life was already imparted; and that the powers of hell could never prevail against her. And having through the mercy of God received the truth in all its fulness, she gave evidence, in the midst of much bodily suffering and many severe privations, that she had already entered into his rest. ‘For we which have believed do enter into rest,’ and cease from our own dead works; and such a peace,—such an assurance of hope, such a sense of divine love spread itself over her existence;—from that time she was ready continually to break forth in singing, and the burthen of her song was, ‘Glory to God on high; peace and good will towards man.’

“But it was remarkable that in proportion as spiritual peace was imparted to her, her poor body began sensibly and rapidly to decay: insomuch so that after a while she was obliged entirely to take to her miserable pallet. Yet why should I call it miserable, for I do not hesitate to say, that her bodily sufferings were actually as nothing when placed in contrast with the exquisite peace which she enjoyed without interruption. Poor old lady; I have sat by her for hours, I know not whether by night or day, sometimes reading by the feeble light of the lamp, sometimes conversing, sometimes in silent meditation. I saw that death was approaching by slow and

measured steps, stealing kindly and tenderly upon her, being disarmed of all his terrors, and having this commission only, to open the cage and let the dove go free. For the soul of this meek and holy woman might, through the sovereign grace of the blessed Lord, be addressed in these words, 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' (Psalm lxxviii. 13). And thus all was bright and full of joy, as it regarded Agnace ; and I thank my God that it was so ordained that my sufferings, though I blush to call my light afflictions which endured but for a moment by such a term, should have redounded so abundantly to the consolation of this gentle and patient creature. Yet my unbelieving heart was not able to cast off all its selfish fear. It was an awful prospect to me to think that I must, alone, and in such a scene, witness the mortal agony of this poor creature, and be shut up with her cold remains, perhaps for hours. Oh ! I was unbelieving ; but I am forgiven ; I have not a master who cannot be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. I thank God, however, that I never betrayed these selfish apprehensions to Agnace, but tried to act by her as a daughter to a tender mother ; and, oh ! how was her poor heart drawn out in love to me, and in gratitude to God for giving her such a friend in the hour of need !

“ Thus we went on, for I hardly know how many days, without experiencing any interruptions but from occasional visits from la Mere Ursule. Our cell was considerably removed from the subterranean chapel :

yet we heard the service which took place in the presence of the bishop. Agnace was awakened from sleep by the sweet notes of the chaunting; and, starting up in her bed, 'Clarice!' she said, 'are we already received into glory? Do I not hear the voices of angels? Is the bitterness of death already passed?'

"I wept when she put the question; and putting my arms around her I soothed her to rest again. Oh! how did I love that poor deserted one: but I was called away to the interview with the bishop; and the worst I then dreaded was, that I should not be taken back to Agnace. Truly I should then have grieved had it been decided that I should immediately have been restored to the light of day, and therefore when the bishop commanded me back to my dungeon, it was with difficulty that I dissembled the thankfulness of joy which I experienced. It seems that my judges had been at a loss what to decide respecting me; and thus I was again left with dear Agnace for many days; at the end of which time I was brought up several times into the chamber above the porch, and there permitted to be seen by several of the sisters, though never allowed to speak to any one. There I had several fruitless conferences with Father Joachim and the Inquisitor.

"It has since appeared to me quite evident, why there appeared to be so much irresolution in their treatment of me; the state of the times was such that they did not dare to do by me as they had done by Agnace (and probably many others in time past), that is, without accounting to any one respecting my

fate, to cause me to disappear from my place, never more to return to it, and to exercise their will upon me in their secret councils in whatever way might suit them best. But this, at that time, was not thought to be expedient. Hence, when their fiery zeal would have urged them to finish the contest by some deadly decision, worldly prudence held them back; and yet, as the Inquisitor stated to them in my presence, it was totally impossible for them to set me at liberty, after having made me acquainted with the existence of Agnace;—a measure which had been suggested by this Jesuit himself, in order, as has appeared to me upon reflection, that the Superieure, and perhaps the bishop, might thus be compelled to more severe measures with me than the former had been inclined to adopt; and the Superieure had fallen into this snare from the persuasion that the sight of the sufferer, and perhaps her arguments, might tend to bring me round, it not having occurred to her, in the agitation of the moment, that when I had once been made acquainted with the frightful secrets of the house, it would become necessary to exclude me for ever from all intercourse with the family. And yet, at the same time, it was not easy to suggest any means by which to account for my total disappearance, without exciting suspicions which might eventually prove highly detrimental to the safety of the establishment.

“My recantation could not then have served their purpose, as it might have done at first. This, also, was evident to them all, and I can hardly conceive to what measures they would have had recourse, if

various circumstances had not occurred together, which would have effectually brought them through their difficulties, had it not been for the critical state of public affairs, and the strong excitement of popular opinion against monastic houses ; which excitement awaited only a mere conjectural whisper, that some one of the sisters was suffering persecution within the walls, to rise into a flame. But these various circumstances, apparently so fortunate for the promotion of their views, were, first, the pestilence ; and secondly, the terror which all the sisters felt in approaching an individual supposed to be dying, or to have died from the disease ; and thirdly, the actual death of poor Agnace in the very midst of the ravages of this pestilence.

“ It would have been strange if minds such as some of our rulers possessed, could not have wrought out from all these favourable circumstances, such a conclusion as was most to be desired by them. For three days, or more, it was evident that Agnace was approaching to extremities. She might have lingered longer, but her parting breath was exhausted by the vehemence with which she refused the last sacraments, tendered to her by Father Joachim ; and the earnestness with which she renounced all hopes or expectations of salvation from any quarter but from that of the merits of Christ, as revealed to her by the Father, through the influences of the Holy Spirit.—Thus she was upheld unto the end. Neither was she moved by the anathema maranathas of the priest, who, as he left the cell, shook the dust from his feet.

“Well do I remember that solemn moment in which all departed, namely, the priest, the abbess, la Mere Ursule, and Annunciata, and closed the door on me and the dying saint. I was stupid with grief. I sat by her pillow—I raised her in my arms—my tears fell upon her pale cold face. She was sensible of all I did for her. I heard her say, in a low and inward voice, ‘Blessed, happy, precious child! fear not, my own beloved Clarice! Yet a little while, my sweet one, and all will be well. I thank my God for thee my Clarice.’ She slept, I think, a little, while I thus held her; but insensibly her head sank heavier on my breast: I listened, and thought that she had ceased to breathe, and I thought that her soul had passed. That it was not so, made no difference to my feelings at that time; I was alone, as to all human comfort. And then from that time the remembrance of events became confused; neither can I distinguish that which really happened from dreams and unrealities. I cannot say whether they spent their rage upon me by spectral similitudes, introduced into my cell, or whether these things were the effect of an unsettled brain; I cannot but believe that I was, from that period until I had been in this blessed place of rest for several days, in a sort of delirium. Perhaps I was actually under the influence of fever, or the blood driven from the heart had rushed to the head.

“I know not at what hour they removed poor Agnace; but they took her up, supposing her to be dead, into the cell over the porch. Whether it was the removal to a better air, or whatever other cause,

I know not, but certain it is that she revived on being brought up, and that the Superieure again entreated her to receive the sacraments appointed by the church ; but these she resisted, and, as I was afterwards told, died as she had lived, to the unfeigned horror of the Superieure. Nevertheless, it was thought prudent to bury her with all their idolatrous ceremonies.

“ They brought me up to see the funeral. I saw it through the grated window. It was torch-light ; and they told me that I was buried in that grave, and that I existed no longer as to this world ; that Pauline and Angelique would believe me dead, and have no motive to engage Madame Verani any more in my cause : for it had not escaped their notice that these two beloved sisters had found some means of conveying intelligence respecting me to Madame Verani. And they told me that my friends would suppose me dead—my mother and my brother, my beautiful brother, as I used to call him, and as I have since found him—my own sweet brother ! And I grew wild and desperate, and was dragged down to my cell. Nor can I tell you how the time went, till the hour of my deliverance ; I knew not one hour from another—I was left in darkness—I took no note of time. I slept and dreamed, and when pressed with hunger and thirst, ate my bread and drank my water, and stretched myself again on my pallet.

“ And strange wild visions floated over my mind, my thoughts not being in the smallest degree under my own control ; neither can I describe their nature. God be praised, who had not forgotten me in this my

hour of utmost need, that they were not wicked or blasphemous. No ! I was preserved from those horrors. But they were more like the thoughts of a little child—visions of my father's house and father's park, and distant hills, and running waters, and sunny landscapes, sometimes clear, and again confused—sometimes sweet, and then changing into all that is horrible. And I fancied that it was one long night since Agnace had died, and that the morning, though still far off, would yet come and dispel the gloom. And I confounded the sweet image of my father with that which I had conceived of my blessed Saviour ; and that of Agnace with my aged grandmother, whom I hardly remember. And this was my condition when the day of my wonderful deliverance arrived.

“ It was, as it were, after a long dream, a sort of visionary mode of existence which I cannot describe, that a sudden jarring sound caused me to start. I arose on my feet : the door of my prison was thrown open, a flood of dazzling and confounding light burst upon my eyes, and two men appeared. I could not distinguish them by sight, for I was blinded by what was to me an excess of light : but I knew their voices ; they were those of Father Joachim and the Jesuit. The father seized me round the waist, called me an accursed one, dragged, or rather carried me, I know not which, along what passages, or through what doors I cannot say, though I am aware that several doors were fastened and barred behind us. I knew not what these men said to me, as we proceeded ; a few horrible words stood out, as it were,

in high relief above all the other parts of their speech ; these were, the inquisition, the auto da fe, the question.

“ At length we arrived at a winding stair, which ascended, as I supposed, to the level of the earth. There I struggled from the father’s grasp, and fell at his feet, imploring mercy where mercy never was,—even from an offended and jealous member of the great papal anti-christian church. He first spurned me from him, as I seized the skirt of his robe, and then seizing me and dragging me up, he ascended the stairs, followed by the Jesuit, bearing a torch.—And here,” said Clarice, “ have I brought my wonderful history to that point in which the kind, the ineffably kind and marvellous providences of my Almighty Father begin to unfold themselves ; shining with a heavenly and inextinguishable light through the clouds which for a while had wholly darkened my unbelieving mind. ‘ Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful mercy to the children of men.’ ”

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

SUCH was the account which our sweet Clarice (to whom I shall now give her baptismal name of Emily) gave of herself. I will not pay so poor a compliment to my reader, as to suppose that it will be needful to make many comments on this extraordinary history. Suffice it to say that we all heard it with intense interest, and that from the moment it was concluded, Pauline and I resolved to renounce that form of worship which had for ages maintained its influence over the earth by deeds of horror, such as she described, and such as we had seen.

But inasmuch as when I commenced my history I expected to finish it in a few sheets, I am now much disconcerted to find that it has run to a thick volume, and therefore am desirous of bringing it to a conclusion as speedily as possible : although I cannot but feel that the reader who has followed me so far, will not be without anxiety to know what more I have to relate respecting the persons who have acted, in several instances, such parts in my narrative as must have rendered them objects of some interest.

My reader may calculate the years which have passed since the boiling populace of France poured over the boundaries of their kingdom into that of

Sardinia. During the course of those years, we, who were then young, have been descending into the vale of life, and many have been the changes which we have experienced since the period of which I am now speaking; namely, our residence with the worthy family in Switzerland.

Having concluded the wonderful history of dear Emily, I must inform my reader how Mr Beaumont became acquainted with d'Ivannois. It was at Geneva, to which place he had come on his way to St Siffren, to inquire after his sister. William, at that time, undertook to accompany him to St Siffren, and there, finding that Madame Verani had a relation who had just entered the convent, the three parties were drawn together by the same tie, namely, that of a dear friend of each having taken the fatal vows under the same roof.

Edward and William it seems, had at first no other expectation in coming to St Siffren than to see those whom they loved, if it were only through the grating in the church; but other hopes were afterwards awakened by the destruction of many religious houses in different parts of the king of Sardinia's dominions. Hence arose the project, so successfully executed, for the deliverance of their friends.

After Emily had relieved her mind by making us acquainted with her whole story, and when Pauline and I had entirely decided upon leaving the Apostate Church, the spirits of the whole party became calm. Sweet Emily recovered her health and bloom, and all that cheerfulness of manner which accompanies bright views of religion.

The winter had set in severely, and Madame d'Ivannois would not hear of our moving till the spring. In truth I had no home to which to fly. Monsieur Verani had transmitted my property (though in a much diminished state) to a banker in Geneva, from whom, by Mr Beaumont's advice, it was sent to England, as safer at that time than any place on the continent. I had therefore a small independence ; but I had no home, excepting, as I thought, in the heart of my Pauline ; for poor Madame Verani was then as much a wanderer as myself. Yet I was not anxious ; Madame d'Ivannois would not part with us, and accordingly we spent the whole winter there, in that sweet solitude, often entirely shut up by snow. Monsieur and Madame Verani had come to see us just before one of the heaviest falls : hence we were a very large party, and we had the bible open to us, and we were continually studying that holy book, finding new beauties, and enjoying new privileges, as believers, every day ; the pastor of the village, a holy, pious, and enlightened old man, often joining our party.

I could, did it suit me, enter into a long description of the various means used by William and his parents to induce Pauline so entirely to cast off the weight of the vow which she had taken, as to accept her cousin for a companion for life. It would be too much to repeat all the arguments which they used : but that which chiefly prevailed upon her was this ; that as her vows had been taken without the sanction of the written word, and merely according to the pleasure of man, they were no longer binding

when they were seen to be contrary to the will of God. For Christ our Lord has never required of his creatures, that they should, on his account, reject that decree by which man is commanded to leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife ; “forbidding to marry” being a mark of a church given to will-worship, rather than one holding a pure faith, as may be proved from many passages of scripture. Accordingly, soon after Christmas day, my own beloved Pauline became the wife of William, and the happy daughter of Monsieur and Madame d’Ivannois. We were a large party at the wedding, for I verily believe there were not ten persons in the valley who were not present, nor one individual who did not partake of the good cheer.

Were I to live to the end of time, I think that I should not forget that day. It was the last day of the year, and the whole valley was covered with snow, not to speak of the amazing heights by which we were encompassed, which were one vast mass of snow, except in those parts where the steepness of the rocks rendered it impossible for it to lay ; and these parts being almost black, formed a very curious contrast with the dazzling whiteness of the snow around them. The window of the room where I slept commanded a magnificent ravine, through which, when the waters were not pent up by the frost, rushed a rapid, foaming torrent, continually gathering magnitude by innumerable mountain streams, sometimes bursting into light, and again losing itself between the pines which darkened its course, having their roots in the rocks which formed

its channel.—Across the valley rose a mountain, which obstructed the heavens to nearly one-third of the space from the natural horizon, being elevated several thousand feet above us, while the valley itself was as many thousand feet above the level of the sea ; and though two miles distant, this mighty mass seemed, at times, to press painfully on the eye, yet the pine woods seemed only as small specks upon its huge acclivities. But rock, and wood, and heath, and mountain-path, were, at the time I mention, buried under the snow ; and a mighty glacier extended from fields of eternal snow on the summit of the heights, and descending between this principal mountain and another of nearly the same eminence on its left, was scarcely able to elevate its blue sparkling pyramids above the masses of fresh snow which had fallen from above.

Thus we were encompassed with snow, on the morning appointed for the marriage ; nevertheless the sun illuminated the heights, though the valley itself was partially shaded, as we set out from the house to proceed to the village church. The bride and her female attendants were drawn in sledges, or carriages from which the wheels had been removed, and, as I before said, nearly the whole population of the village, all clad in their holiday attire, accompanied the procession, and the village bells were ringing. Their tones, it is true, did not equal those of the bells of our convent, but the sound was light and gay, at least we felt it to be such : and the peasants, as they followed and accompanied us, occasionally struck up a stanza of some hymn,

choosing the subject in reference to the occasion, showing that marriage had been appointed in Paradise, and was accounted blessed of Him who said, It is not good for man to be alone; and how the Saviour had applied the emblem to himself and his church, when her redemption shall be completed in the resurrection of all whom the Father has given him; thus using the figure in its scriptural sense, in all holiness, and in a way which even the most daring scoffer could not have gainsaid; and not blasphemously and familiarly applying it to express the union between any single individual of the human race and the heavenly bridegroom, as in the ritual of the profession of a religieuse under the Roman Catholic polity. For the church, the bride, is one: nor does she enter into that glorious and perfect union with her Saviour, shown forth by the espousals of our first parents in their state of innocence, till all her members have entered into glory, and the union of the whole body is complete. Then, indeed, will she be found spotless; then will she be endowed with his beauty, and be glorious in his glory.

The peasants had crowned themselves with holly and acanthus and broom; and as we proceeded, our numbers increased, insomuch so, that the little church, when we arrived therein, was quite filled, and every countenance was lighted up with joy, for the poor people were pleased with the choice which William, who was a sort of master among them, had been induced to make. The elders had known him from a child, and they hoped that he and his wife would

be as kind to their children, as his parents had been to them ; and Pauline encouraged this feeling by the sweet graciousness of her manner. She was happy, and she was grateful to her God, and she used no art to conceal this feeling. She looked smilingly round on her poor friends ; and I rejoice to say, that I have reason to believe those smiles did not promise more than she has been enabled to perform ; for she has been a blessing, through the divine assistance, to that solitary valley—that little world among the mountains.

I was much struck with the simplicity of the ceremony of marriage, and with the blessing afterwards pronounced by the worthy pastor. It was impossible for me not to draw comparisons between the simple services of the Reformed Church, wherein more is meant than meets the ear, and wherein that which is divine and spiritual is contained under forms which are accounted of little importance ; and that mode of worship of which the form is every thing, and in which the very deepest mysteries are handled by man, and made to subsist in vain and blasphemous ceremonies.

We returned to the house as we had come ; but we could not but remark, that the sun having arisen, during our continuance in the church, above the summits of the mountains, was now shedding its full blaze of glory on the valley, illuminating every snow-clad branch or bough, causing the violet and azure peaks of the glaciers to sparkle like heaps of jewels, and making the frozen streams to begin to filter through the rocks. The token was taken as a good

one by the simple people, and a new hymn was raised on the occasion. Nor did we cease to sing till we had entered the hospitable mansion, and then what was to be done? We, the inmates of the house, were to administer to our humble friends from the ample store of good things provided by Madame d'Ivannois; and when all were fed,—and truly we had much to do to see that no one wanted,—the pastor assembled us in the hall, and spoke to us of the divine goodness, not only exhibited in providing for all our earthly wants, but in that most excellent and ineffable work, by which the redemption of the believer is secured to him, independently of all his own works and deservings; and then taking up that word salvation,—he enlarged upon it—he dwelt upon it—he expatiated upon it—till every one present melted with tears of joy and gratitude. Surely I never beheld a scene like that. So we dismissed our poor friends, and were glad of some refreshment ourselves; and Madame d'Ivannois had not neglected to provide an excellent supper, for it was sun-set when we sat down to this meal; and we finished our day in speaking of the wonderful goodness of God, as especially manifested towards ourselves, the poor religieuses. Thus terminated this blessed wedding day; but by this marriage I was naturally more separated from my own dear Pauline, and drawn more closely to Emily, and was, in consequence, induced to accompany her to England, when the melting of the snows had cleared the passes.

It was in the month of April that we tore ourselves from the dear family in Switzerland; and pro-

ceeding through Geneva and Mayence, in order to avoid France, we came down the Rhine to Holland, and there took shipping for England, meeting with only one adventure worthy of record during our journey.

We had stopped at a small town on Sunday, where we were at some loss to make ourselves understood, not one of the party being able to speak German. Our perplexity being great, the hostess went over the way in search of an interpreter ; making us understand that there was a poor woman, a stranger, who had arrived there a few days before, and had been stopped from mere penury ; not having wherewithal to carry her on to Mayence, where she expected to meet a friend. Conceive our astonishment when this poor creature arrived, to find in her, *la Mere Genefride*, dressed as a peasant, and reduced to the extremest poverty.

Oh, that was a joyful moment ! I rushed into her arms. Emily did the same, though at the hazard of frightening the poor old religieuse into fits ; for, as we found afterwards, she was as little aware of the substitution of poor *Agnace* for *Clarice*, in the funeral ceremony, as I had been. From that time the troubles of the worthy woman were at an end ; she accompanied us to England, and never left us till the hour of her death.

She could give us little account of what had happened at *St Siffren* after we had left it, having fled during the night of the uproar to the cottage of the peasant who had nursed *Ella Rosa* ; from whence (having changed her dress) she had actually begged

her way to the place where we had met her—her object being to reach Madame Barthelemis, who resided at Mayence. She added that she had been laid up during the snow at Geneva, and had met with much kindness there.

It was at the end of a month from our leaving the house of Madame d'Ivannois that we arrived in London, and proceeded, without loss of time, to the house of Mr Beaumont, in the beautiful county of Devon. There we found a handsome house, though not large, situated in a beautiful wooded park, having the ground diversified with gently swelling rises; for in England there are no mountains. Yet there is a deep verdure and richness of landscape, which makes even a native of Piedmont almost ready to say—I can dispense with mountains. And all is so clean and neat and fresh, and consistent, that one is ready to exclaim,—Surely this England is an earthly paradise! And then there is such a liberty of conscience—such an ease and freedom to do well, that there is no law that restrains in aught but in that which is evil.

And in the same parish, just beyond the woods, was a beautiful villa. It was small, indeed, but as elegant and fair as a vase of alabaster; and there resided the man to whom, as Mr Beaumont often said, he owed, under God, many of those exalted views of religion which made him what he was. He had been a school and college friend of Edward, though some years older. Mr Beaumont had given him the care of the parish in which he lived; and he was ready to receive his friend when we arrived.

It will be expected that I should describe him, but I should find it difficult so to do, because there was nothing which struck a stranger in him at first, but extreme humility and gentleness, added to great kindness of manner. His appearance, however, had all the elegance which proceeds from extreme refinement of sentiment—using that expression in the best sense of which it is capable; for it almost appeared to me as if true piety had particularly manifested itself in him, by rendering him one of the most blameless, elegant, and simple persons I had ever seen. It does not suit me to give his real name, I will therefore call him Theophilus—the signification of which name is well understood, and is as appropriate to him as to any one I ever knew.

We did not see him at first to advantage; he was under a cloud of natural grief, for it seems that he had lately followed to the grave a fair young sister who lived with him; they called her Lucy, and he still wore a band of crape round his hat, in memory of her. The return of his friend seemed to be a great consolation to him, and he was pressed to spend every hour with us, which he could spare from his parochial duties.

Thus was the party with which we set out from Switzerland augmented; and being happy, most happy, among ourselves, we avoided other acquaintance, as much as neighbourly kindness would permit. The English are particularly suited to give charms to domestic life. I felt myself getting too much attached to this society, and asked myself more than once what I was about? We are poor weak crea-

tures, and it is well for us that we should not be left to our own discretion.

But it may be asked,—What did la Mere Genefride do amongst us? I reply, that she was very happy. She had an apartment to herself, and within it a light closet, and there the poor creature dressed up a sort of altar, and hung up a cross on the wall, and set up a waxen baby for a Virgin, decorating her altar with artificial flowers; and she kept this closet so shut up, that I had been some weeks in the house before I accidentally saw its interior.

I was much shocked at this discovery, and described what I had seen to Emily and her brother, and they were of opinion that we should still seem to be ignorant of the circumstance, but take every opportunity to engage the venerable mother in hearing the bible and listening to true statements of doctrine. And as we feared lest she should tamper with the servants, Emily and I resolved to wait upon her, and assist her to dress, by which we attached her more and more to ourselves; and although she never, till on her death bed, acknowledged her entire conviction that Christ was all in all, and the Roman Catholic Church Apostate, yet some years afterwards, getting another peep into the closet, I perceived that the cross, the image, and the artificial flowers had disappeared, and that nothing was left on the table but a green cloth, on which lay an open bible, a hossock being on the floor before the table.

And now, my reader, how shall I, who was once a veiled and cloistered nun, venture to close my narrative. May I dare to say that the year of my

noviciate, that is, the year which was dated from my becoming a sister of the white veil, was not concluded before I became the happy wife of Edward Beaumont; that I am now the mother of two sons, taller than myself, and of three daughters, namely, Emily, Pauline, and Agnace; that my sweet sister Emily was prevailed upon, some months after my marriage, to become the wife of Theophilus; and that my eldest son expects, with the divine permission, to be blessed, in a few weeks, with the hand of his cousin Agnace, in whom all the graces, personal and mental, of her lovely mother have bloomed afresh.

This marriage is waiting only for the arrival of Pauline and William, who are on the road from their sweet valley, with three of their family, the two elder of whom are sons, and the younger a daughter, named after me; and thus I terminate my history, trusting that those things respecting the Roman Catholic Church, which I have faithfully recorded, may tend to fill the inhabitants of this Protestant land with a sense of gratitude to that God, who has liberated their country from the slavery of that great apostacy whose name is *Mystery*.

THE END.

Thurman L. L. L.

Sherwood, Mary Martha,

The Nun

Philadelphia 1835

P.o.angl. 378 g

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10750168-6